

ABSTRACT

THE INTERACTION OF CHURCH HEALTH, THEOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING, AND THE FIRST YEAR OF CONNECTED IN CHRIST AT KINGSWOOD UNITED METHODIST CHURCH IN CLOVIS, NEW MEXICO

by

Bradford Roy Reeves

The purpose of the project was to determine the effectiveness of the first year of the Connected in Christ process in strengthening church health and improving the theological understanding of the laypeople of Kingswood United Methodist Church.

The Beeson Church Health Questionnaire was used to determine the effect on church health of the first year of the Connected in Christ process. A researcher-designed survey instrument measured the effectiveness of the Connected in Christ process to strengthen the theological understanding and practice of Kingswood United Methodist Church. The study also used an open-ended questionnaire to determine the effectiveness of the Connected in Christ process upon the Connected in Christ team of Kingswood United Methodist Church. This project found a significant improvement in the church health of Kingswood United Methodist Church and the theological understanding of the laypeople of Kingswood United Methodist Church.

DISSERTATION APPROVAL

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled
THE INTERACTION OF CHURCH HEALTH, THEOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING,
AND THE FIRST YEAR OF CONNECTED IN CHRIST AT KINGSWOOD UNITED
METHODIST CHURCH IN CLOVIS, NEW MEXICO

presented by

Bradford Roy Reeves

has been accepted towards fulfillment

of the requirements for the

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY degree at

Asbury Theological Seminary

Mentor

April 18, 2005

Date

Internal Reader

April 18, 2005

Date

Vice President of Educational Development

April 18, 2005

Date

THE INTERACTION OF CHURCH HEALTH, THEOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING,
AND THE FIRST YEAR OF CONNECTED IN CHRIST AT KINGSWOOD UNITED
METHODIST CHURCH IN CLOVIS, NEW MEXICO

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of
Asbury Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Ministry

by

Bradford Roy Reeves

May, 2005

© 2005

Bradford Roy Reeves

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES.....	vii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	viii
CHAPTER 1. Overview of the Study.....	1
Background.....	1
Context of the Study.....	2
The Problem.....	3
Biblical and Theological Foundations.....	5
Description of the Project.....	6
Purpose.....	7
Research Questions.....	7
Definition of Terms.....	7
Theology.....	7
Spiritually Mature Church.....	8
Church Health.....	8
The Process at Kingswood.....	8
Methodology.....	11
Participants.....	12
Variables.....	12
Overview of the Dissertation.....	12
CHAPTER 2. Review of the Literature.....	13
Theological Diffuseness.....	13
Precedents in the Literature.....	13

The Two Forms of Pantheism.....	14
Moralistic Pantheism in Detail.....	15
Deism.....	16
The Pervasiveness of the Problem.....	17
The Cultural Shift.....	24
The Lack of Spiritual Direction.....	24
The Western View of the Trinity.....	25
The Prevalence of Non-Trinitarian Worship.....	25
Other Potential Carriers of Pantheism and Deism.....	27
The Prevalence of Non-Healthy Churches.....	27
The Way Back toward an Orthodox Expression of the Faith.....	28
Biblical Precedents for the Trinity.....	28
What Is a Person?.....	31
Problem of Trinitarian Doctrine.....	32
Importance of Trinitarian Doctrine.....	33
Content of Trinitarian Doctrine.....	33
God Is One.....	33
God Is Three.....	34
God Is Community.....	34
God Is Humility.....	35
God Is Diversity.....	35
God Is Unity.....	35
Trinity and the Kingdom of God.....	36

Trinity and Ecclesiology.....	37
Church Is Community.....	38
Church Hierarchy	38
Church Is Diverse.....	39
Church Is Love.....	40
Church Is Humility.....	40
Church Health Schemes.....	41
Church Health Schemes since 2000.....	43
United Methodist Churches Connected in Christ.....	44
Beeson Church Health Characteristics.....	49
Research Methodology.....	50
Conclusion.....	51
CHAPTER 3. Design of the Study.....	52
Research Questions.....	52
Research Question #1.....	53
Research Question #2.....	53
Research Question #3.....	53
Participants.....	54
Variables.....	54
Instrumentation.....	54
Questionnaire Pretest, Mid-Test, and Posttest.....	55
Data Collection.....	55
Questionnaire Administration.....	56

Data Analysis.....	56
Chapter 4. Finding of the Study.....	57
Profile of the Participants.....	57
Summary.....	66
Chapter 5. Summary and Conclusions.....	67
Overall Health of Kingswood	67
Limitations of the Study.....	70
Unexpected Conclusions.....	73
My Personal Theological Journey.....	74
Practical Applications.....	83
APPENDIX A. Beeson Church Health Questionnaire.....	84
APPENDIX B. Open-Ended Survey for CIC Team.....	90
APPENDIX C. Connected in Christ Survey.....	91
APPENDIX D. Chart of Attendance and Membership of Kingswood UMC.....	94
APPENDIX E. Sermon Schedule for 11 January to 20 June 2004.....	95
WORKS CITED.....	96
WORKS CONSULTED.....	101

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1	Religious Beliefs by Denominations.....	19
Table 2.2	Church Health Schemes Prior to 2000 Primary Sources.....	41
Table 2.3	Characteristics of Church Health Secondary Sources Before 2000.....	42
Table 2.4	Church Health Schemes Since 2000.....	43
Table 2.5	Connected in Christ.....	45
Table 4.1	Christian Life as a Group.....	59
Table 4.2	Godhead as a Group.....	60
Table 4.3	Bible as a Group.....	60
Table 4.4	Passionate Spirituality as a Group.....	61
Table 4.5	Authentic Community as a Group.....	62
Table 4.6	Functional Structures as a Group.....	62
Table 4.7	Church Health Characteristics Comparison between EPC, WDCMA, WOCUMC, and GAGBC, and Kingswood.....	65

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

No project of this magnitude can be accomplished without a tremendous amount of help. First, I thank Dr. Leslie Andrews for telling us that there would be the “dark night of the dissertation.” Indeed, many dark nights. This truthful word kept me moving along when all hope seemed lost. Second, I thank Dr. Tom Tumblin for being my mentor. Just when I had decided that I would never get a mentor, he rescued me. Thank you, Tom, you have been a blessing. Third, I thank Mike and Ginger Caldwell for believing in me enough to pay for the first two years of tuition for my doctoral program. Ginger has gone to her reward, but I deeply thank both. Fourth, I thank the First United Methodist of Muleshoe, Texas, for providing for the tuition during my third year of doctoral studies and for being patient as I “tried out” many of the things I was learning. Fifth, I thank the Kingswood United Methodist Church for eagerly accepting a pastor who was “ABD” in a doctoral program. They were a church looking for a pastor that understood them, and I was a pastor looking for a church that understood me. I thank God that he put us together. Sixth, I thank Bishop D. Max Whitfield for bringing the Connected in Christ process to New Mexico and for sending me to New Mexico just in time to participate. Seventh, I thank Jay and Sally Messenger for being encouragers along the way. May God greatly increase your number. Eighth, I thank Rhonda Boswell, my faithful secretary, for her many hours of copying, faxing, and otherwise helping with this project. Ninth, I thank my parents, Harry and Velma Reeves, for having me and giving me an insatiable desire to learn. Tenth, I thank my children for insisting that daddy work on his dissertation. It has been their project as much as mine. Eleventh, I thank my wife, Sherrie. Besides Jesus, you are the joy of my life. When God called me to preach, he said, “He is going to need a lot of help.” Then, he

sent me you. You have inspired me, prayed for me, and stood like a rock beside me. At times, we have stood alone, but you have never wavered. Thank you, sweetheart. Finally, I thank my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for saving me, sanctifying me, and empowering me with his Spirit. This project was undertaken with the hope that it would help his Church to be his bride. May God use it to his glory. Amen.

CHAPTER 1

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

Background

The weather was clear and warm, but my mood was black and cold. I was driving back from Abilene, Texas, to Merkel, Texas. I was crying out to God. I knew that paganism was falling across the land. Further, I believed that paganism was in the local church as much as anywhere. Indeed, non-Christian thinking might be worse in the church than anywhere else. I believed God had put me in an impossible situation. I did not know what to do; I did not know what anyone could do.

I stayed in this mood for the next few months and then went to the Alpha course training at First United Methodist Church, Bedford, Texas. There I met a man who described himself as the one and only full-time evangelist in the Episcopal Church. During breaks, I began to share with this evangelist my frustration about my church. The evangelist wondered in his last parish why God did not send fire down on the church and destroy his church. Then, God convinced him that his church was a “holding pen” to keep the religious people in reach for a time when a priest like him would come and lead them to God. I realized that God uses the United Methodist churches in West Texas and Eastern New Mexico as holding pens. A holding pen church is a church where religious but unspiritual people attend. Then God brings the right clergyperson to lead them to God. God placed me as such a clergyperson. I became determined to be one of God’s instruments to effect change.

I just wished someone had written a book on leading a church out of paganism. How I needed the insights from that book. I realized that I could write the book. I did not

know how to begin. Finally, I realized that my thoughts consisted of a dissertation project. Here is the result of that season of prayer and anguish and the study process that ensued. In the process, I learned that the paganism I saw was pantheism and deism.

Context of the Study

The general context of the study is the western half of the Northwest Texas Annual Conference and the northeastern one-third of the New Mexico Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. In geographical terms, the context is the Llano Estacado area of the United States. Five basic types of churches exist in this area. They are Roman Catholic, Baptist, charismatic, Church of Christ, and mainline churches. Of the mainline people in the region, Ninety percent or more are United Methodist. In Clovis, New Mexico, a small city of forty thousand, there are more people of Methodist preference than all other mainline communities combined (Percept 15). Further, most towns and smaller cities in the area have no other mainline presence other than the United Methodist Church. In this religious context, the holding pen mentioned above is the mainline churches and, usually, only the United Methodist Church.

The holding pen situation among mainline churches creates a massive church health problem. Many church members attend church because they feel a need to fulfill their religious duty. By religious duty, they do not mean anything spiritual or, in many cases, even overtly Christian. They come to church; they work in the church. They do not attempt to pray consistently or read the Bible (though they see the Bible as an important, even authoritative, book). Their expression of their faith is confined to attendance in church, work in church, moral living (usually in a culturally acceptable way), and living life as the upper class of society, which is why they believe God has blessed their

Christian faith. Depending on which type of alternative faith such persons possess, they may seek to do good deeds from time to time. Nevertheless, weak faith rules in such believers. God gave me a great love for these people, and this love explains the large measure of angst mentioned at the start of this chapter.

The particular context of this study is Clovis, New Mexico, and especially Kingswood United Methodist Church. Clovis is a military town with a large transient population of Air Force people. Cannon Air Force Base is also a training center for the Singapore Air Force and formerly for the South Korean Air Force. After retirement, many Air Force people, including many Asians, move back to Clovis to retire. Those that do return, return because of the conservative nature of the area and the semi-arid climate. Clovis has several non-United Methodist mainline churches in town. Remarkably, evangelical pastors serve all but one of these mainline churches (Clemons). My observation, based on this climate, is that First United Methodist Church in Clovis is the predominant holding pen in Clovis, New Mexico. Kingswood United Methodist Church does have some holding pen tendencies. Key factors mitigating against a holding pen mentality at Kingswood United Methodist Church is the fact that almost one-third of the active members of Kingswood United Methodist Church have attended a Walk to Emmaus. Kingswood United Methodist Church is a spiritually alive place though some key problem areas exist in the church. This mixture of holding pen and non-holding pen puts Kingswood United Methodist Church on the verge of being a truly healthy church.

The Problem

My observation is that theologically the area is conservative but is also a hotbed for pantheism in a Christian form. Pantheism is the predominant form of paganism found

in the region. Pantheism occurs because of the agricultural nature of the area. Christian faith reduces to feeling the presence of God or of a god. Frequently this feeling exists without a desire to seek salvation from sins or to have a relationship with a personal God. Such persons understand God to be the great moral principle of the world, and the way to follow him is to be moral in one's own strength. My observation is that the area is also deistic. God is personal but no longer engaged in this world, or God is engaged preachers or missionaries but not the rest of the world. Most people use trinitarian language, but answers to questions such as, "Is God present in our world?" "Does God speak to people today, and if so, to whom?" "Tell me, what sin is God seeking to root out of your life?" "When is the last time that the Holy Spirit's power was evident in your life?" "Do you believe that your sins are forgiven?" begin to prove Peter Toon's point that many people use trinitarian language and are still pantheists (20). In addition, they can still be deists. The continuum between pantheism and deism makes understanding the problem very difficult. This continuum occurs for many reasons, but the biggest is the change of the culture from modernity to postmodernity. Modernity is more deistic, and postmodernity is more pantheistic (Keller 55-56).

The practice of the Roman way of evangelism instead of the Celtic way of evangelism exacerbates this theological problem (Keller 62; Hunter, Celtic Way 47-53). The most common approach to the unchurched and the secular mind is one that demands that they become "like the church" before they become converted.

The existence of alternative faiths in Christian churches greatly influences church health. In most of the local churches I have served, one cannot find agreement on what a church should be. Very often, tradition is the order of the day. The minister runs the

church, consequently weakening lay leadership. Church functions cannot change. Ministry is not gift oriented. Small groups are only discussion groups about biblical themes or more frequently about cultural topics. Relationships are cordial but not warm. Such churches define evangelism as getting people to church. For many of the laypeople in the first five churches I have served, worship is used as a reminder that God is, at best, very distant and, at worst, impersonal. Deep spirituality lived on a daily basis is nonexistent for the large majority of the laypeople.

Biblical and Theological Foundations

Paul stated that renewal would come through the mind (Rom. 12:1-2). If the above description is correct, then the American church is not doing a very good job transforming the minds of people. The mindset and the worldview of many people is not Christian. The American church needs to find a way to have a substantial breakthrough in the world of her people. The Trinity is the Christian view of God. In order to escape pantheism and deism, a thorough understanding of the Trinity needs to be in place. Further, Christians should not only understand the Trinity; they should experience the Trinity. In John 17:20-26, Jesus prays that the church would be one by being one with God the Father and God the Son. By implication, unity with God the Father and God the Son produces unity with God the Spirit. Such unity would cause the world to believe. This experience of oneness with the Trinity should take place in personal and corporate worship, church administration, evangelism, social mission work, and every other field of Christian life.

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are in a circle dance of love with each other. The Father is the “head” of the Trinity not because he is ontologically superior but because he

is the primary person in their oneness. The Trinity seeks to win the salvation of the world by asking Christians to join in the work. God came down in Jesus to be personal in the world. God comes down in the Holy Spirit to live in a believer's heart and to work in the world. Christians enter into the circle dance of the Holy Trinity and thus become part of the Trinity's salvation work in the world. The church, at best, is a mirror of the Trinity. The church's work should be under the headship, salvation, and empowerment of the Trinity. A church's government should model the relationships of the Trinity.

Peter reminds Christians that the whole people of God are the priests (1 Pet. 2:9). In the holding pen church described above, the pastor frequently does the ministry while the laypeople receive the ministry. The unchurched are left out of the ministry altogether. However, if both lay and clergy are priests, representatives of the holy Trinity, then the clergy and laity are a part of a team doing ministry together. Such a church will follow the example of community and teamwork found in the Trinity.

The church best addresses pantheism and deism with an explicit trinitarianism. Church health means, in this context, that the church seeks to be trinitarian in everything that she does. The Trinity revolves around everything, and everything revolves around the Trinity. Any church health scheme, to be truly effective, must involve the Trinity.

The Arkansas annual conferences of the United Methodist Church developed the Connected in Christ process. Bishop Janice Huie recruited Dr. James B. Scott and Dr. Molly Davis Scott to devise a process of church revitalization. The Connected in Christ process renews church vitality by placing a commitment on sixteen different areas. Three of these characteristics are distinctly Wesleyan. This renewal effort targets the mainline church and especially the United Methodist Church. The area commitments also exhibit a

bent toward an outward focus rather than an inward focus. Although not explicitly trinitarian, Connected in Christ reflects a commitment to the trinitarian teaching of the local church. Thus, the process is very amenable to becoming explicitly trinitarian.

Description of the Project

This project was a program evaluation that measured the effectiveness of the first year of the Connected in Christ process in strengthening the church vitality of Kingswood United Methodist Church. The process of Connected in Christ intends to deepen the spiritual maturity of a congregation. At Kingswood United Methodist Church, we included the elements of church health as another measure of church spiritual maturity as well as the theological understanding of the Trinity.

Purpose

The purpose of the project was to determine the effectiveness of the first year of the Connected in Christ process in strengthening church health and spiritual maturity and improving the theological understanding of the laypeople of Kingswood United Methodist Church.

Research Questions

1. What are the changes in theological beliefs of the participants before participating and after participating in the Connected in Christ process as measured by the Connected in Christ instrument?
2. What is the change in the church health of Kingswood United Methodist Church by participating in the Connected in Christ process as measured by the Beeson Church Health Questionnaire?
3. What was the quality of the experience for the lay Connected in Christ team?

Definition of Terms

Each of the following definitions attempts to define the concepts in experiential terms.

Theology

Theology is the set of beliefs that a person holds about God and the things that relate to God (“Theology” 1222). Theology frequently covers the topic of how people know what they know, how they perceive human beings, and what their measurement of truth is or, at least, should be. For this study, the understanding of the Trinity was the primary focus.

Spiritually Mature Church

A spiritually mature church shows a commitment to the sixteen-point grid of Connected in Christ (see Tables 2.4 and 2.5 pp. 43,45). In such a church, God’s values and passions become a commitment to action.

Church Health

Church health is defined as the balance or interplay of the eight Beeson Church Health Characteristics and the sixteen points of Connected in Christ. Lack of health is defined as the low presence or absence of health characteristics (Law 8-9). The eight characteristics of the Beeson Church Health Scheme and the sixteen points of Connected in Christ measure church health (see Table 2.4 p. 43).

The Process at Kingswood

A program contains precise instructions that apply to all churches and all situations. A process gives broad parameters within which each individual church stays while participating in that process. Because Connected in Christ is a process, not a program,

one needs to know what Kingswood United Methodist Church did in that process. In the New Mexico Annual Conference, the process entailed two week-long clergy training events a year. Then, each church selected a team of at least five persons (Kingswood United Methodist Church chose seven) that attended three clergy and lay training sessions a year and met with the pastor on an ongoing basis. The team determined its schedule of meetings in the local church. Kingswood's team met approximately every other week. The first clergy training sessions met on 9-13 February 2004 and covered the major themes of team building, ministry planning, motivation, leadership, and spirituality. Dr. Norman Neaves of Church of the Servant United Methodist Church of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, presented the section on motivation. Bishop Max Whitfield of the Northwest Texas/New Mexico Episcopal Area of the United Methodist Church presented the leadership section. Michael Roberts of the Arkansas Annual Conference Office presented the sections on team building and ministry planning. The team building section covered the Birkman analysis and its use in the local church. Dede Roberts of the Arkansas Annual Conference Office presented the section on spirituality with an emphasis on Wesleyan spirituality. The second clergy training on 11-15 October 2004 covered the themes of making disciples, congregation development, planning, spirituality, and leadership. Dr. Jay Horton of First United Methodist Church of Lubbock, Texas, presented the congregational development and leadership sections. Dede Roberts presented a section on personality types and spirituality. Michael Roberts presented the sections on making disciples and planning. The first clergy and lay training sessions met on 21 August 2004 and introduced the Connected in Christ process (Michael Roberts presenter) and Wesleyan spirituality (Bishop Max Whitfield presenter). The second joint

session on 25 September 2004, led by Michael Roberts, covered the Birkman analysis and its use in team building. The final joint session on 20 November 2004 and led by Michael Roberts covered the making of vision and mission statements for churches. At Kingswood, the Church Council elected the team at its meeting on 28 March, and the team began meeting on 4 April. In addition, the Church Council and I began preparing for Connected in Christ prior to the Connected in Christ team's first meeting. For instance, the church hired a small group minister on 1 November of 2003. I began to share Connected in Christ material with the Church Council at the 22 February meeting and continued each month thereafter. I began preaching a series of theologically oriented sermons beginning 11 January. At first, the topics came from requests from the congregation collected at the Christmas Eve service. Next, sermon topics came from the theological emphasis given at the first Connected in Christ clergy training. These topics included the Wesleyan order of salvation and the means of grace. Thirdly, I based sermon topics on theological questions arising from the popular The Passion of the Christ movie. Finally, sermon topics came from the Connected in Christ theme of lay and clergy being in ministry together. Thus, from 11 January to 20 June 2004, all of the sermons either were theological topics that the Connected in Christ process emphasized or fit within the Connected in Christ emphasis on teaching about Jesus and the Holy Spirit (see Appendix E). This six-month emphasis in preaching created outstanding results. Informally, people talked about the sermons in Sunday school classes, Emmaus reunion groups, the youth group, and other small groups in the church. Non-attendees of Kingswood United Methodist Church requested a few copies of The Passion of the Christ sermons. I discuss the implications of this phenomenon for future studies in Chapter 5.

During the sermons series, the Connected in Christ team at Kingswood United Methodist Church felt itself to be in a quandary. As seen in the above time line, the team met but without the formal training. Nevertheless, the team knew the Connected in Christ process involved Transformational Ministry Planning. Therefore, the team studied an article entitled, “Leading Change: Why Transformation Efforts Fail” (Kotter). From that study, Kingswood’s team determined that the congregation needed to feel a sense of urgency for change. At the time, Kingswood United Methodist Church saw the beginnings of attendance growth and visitor growth seen in Appendix D. The team feared that the church as a whole did not see the need for transformation. After all, Kingswood United Methodist Church showed signs of growth that was unknown in her recent history. The Connected in Christ team determined that a sense of urgency for change must come from a radical obedience to the wishes of God. Therefore, the Connected in Christ team presented to the Church Council a proposal for a two-year spiritual deepening program that included the 40 Days of Purpose program, the Alpha course, and Disciple Bible Study. The team stated the purpose of this two-year spiritual journey as building a sense of urgency to follow the leading of God in the coming years. The Church Council adopted the proposal at their meeting on 28 July, and the team presented the plan to the whole church for discussion and input on 15 August. The 40 Days of Purpose program started the week of 12 September with 180 people participating in eighteen different groups. The last 40 Days of Purpose group met the week of 31 October. By that time, the Connected in Christ team was finalizing the mission and vision statements for the start of the coming year.

Methodology

The project was an evaluative study in the quasi-experimental mode that utilized a pretest, mid-test, and posttest questionnaire design. Thus, this project was a single-group, time-interrupted study. After thorough research, I determined that the Beeson Church Health Survey measured church health (see Appendix A). In addition, I created a list of theological understandings. After further researching each theological understanding and practice, I developed a survey tool for theological beliefs (see Appendix C). I combined the theological understanding survey and the Beeson Church Health Survey into one survey instrument that measured theological practice and church health. I used an open-ended survey with the Connected in Christ team within the church (see Appendix B). This open-ended survey measured the sixteen points of Connected in Christ team and provided a means of measuring spiritual maturity as defined by Connected in Christ. Finally, I collected participant observer notes throughout the process. These events included the weeklong clergy-only training, the Saturday lay/clergy trainings, and the meetings of the Connected in Christ team of Kingswood United Methodist Church.

Participants

The participants were the attendees of Kingswood United Methodist Church of Clovis, New Mexico, over age 16 who attends once a month or more, and the lay team for Connected in Christ of Kingswood United Methodist Church of Clovis, New Mexico. Kingswood United Methodist Church had 239 regular attendees aged sixteen and older at the beginning of this project. The Connected in Christ team had seven members.

Variables

The variables studied were the church health/spiritual maturity of Kingswood

United Methodist Church and the theological beliefs of members of Kingswood United Methodist Church of Clovis, New Mexico. I introduced the Connected in Christ process during this project in the hope of improving church health and deepening theological understanding.

Overview of the Dissertation

Chapter 2 contains the review of literature. Chapter 3 contains the outline of the project. Chapter 4 reveals the results of the project. Chapter 5 contains conclusions drawn from the research.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Theological Diffuseness

I observe that paganism, in the forms of deism and pantheism, has infected and infiltrated the Church. Pantheism and deism exist in the local church and profoundly affect the health of the local church. Though no research findings exist that demonstrate the pervasiveness of pantheism and deism, the literature contains some indications. Though in individual people, the flow from pantheism to orthodoxy is not smooth, the following schema aids my thinking.

Atheism → Pantheism → Deism → Theism → Trinitarianism

A lack of a belief in God gives way to a belief in an impersonal God. A belief in an impersonal God gives way to a belief in a God that is personal but not immanent. A belief in a personal but not immanent God crystallizes into a belief in a God that is personal and immanent. A belief in a personal and immanent God morphs to a belief in the Trinity.

Precedents in the Literature

Toon states that pantheism is prevalent in today's culture:

Perhaps it is appropriate to add that pantheism or panentheism is the belief we would expect and indeed find in modern people, who feel the need to believe in "God" and who live in a culture where the general belief in development, progress and evolution is taken for granted. Here God is the Zeitgeist or the animating Spirit or the Mind or the Life-Force of the evolving culture and universe. In this kind of general environment it is possible to speak quite sincerely in the manner of a trinitarian theist and really be a pantheist. (20)

As I dealt with my own experience in six churches and the literature, I realized that Toon was exactly right, but the issue is much more complicated than he explained.

The Two Forms of Pantheism

Occasionally, someone will show that his or her belief structure is outside the biblical norm. Sometimes people realize that they were comfortable in their faith, but now they are not comfortable in their faith. For example, Jennifer Bradley describes her experience:

I remember one teacher's desperate enthusiasm as he asked us every Sunday morning, "What does the Holy Spirit mean, today, in your life, in 1983?" We were sulky, sleepy 13-year-olds. We hadn't a clue. The Holy Spirit was some warm fuzzy feeling, or an invisible avenger, the presence you invoked after saying, "In the name of the Father and of the Son" and before concluding with "Amen." (16)

Bradley illustrates shades of pantheism. The Holy Spirit is an object that a person feels. He is not a person to whom one can talk or who resides in one's heart. The lack of a personal God is at the core of this form of pantheism. She notes that the Holy Spirit could be an "invisible avenger" (20). She is unclear on the point of the personhood of the Holy Spirit. In her lack of clarity, she is in danger of becoming a full-fledged pantheist. She is a practicing pantheist in that she is not encountering the Holy Spirit in any other way than as a "warm, fuzzy feeling" (20). This practicing pantheism is precisely the problem with her faith and with the faith of thousands, if not millions, of Christians in the United States. She is quite unsure of a personal God or, at least, a God that would relate to her personally. She believes in the progressive moral good of the universe. Bradley's form of pantheism is more real and more open than is usually the case in the American church.

Another form of practicing pantheism exists in the American church—a moralistic pantheism. In this manifestation of pantheism, a person does not encounter a personal God (though someone might believe in a personal God). People do follow the

church rituals, and they make every effort to be moral. The lack of a personal connection with God is what is noteworthy. Here Bradley illustrates this form of practicing pantheism with her description of her mother's faith:

My mother thinks I am a good Catholic. She doesn't have to remind me to go to Mass on Holy Days of Obligation. She knows that my sturdy Catholic morality has kept me unpregnant and un-diseased and that's all she cares to know about sex and this single girl. She is pleased that I am keeping the faith. And I am keeping it, but in a feeble fashion. Friends ask if I am a devout Catholic and I say, well, no. I'm dutiful. I wake up on Sunday mornings, oil away the makeup smudges, wash the smell of Saturday night out of my hair and go to church. But I can't lay claim to devotion. (16)

Her mother's moralistic, pantheistic faith feeds her pantheistic faith. Bradley and her mother want a good feeling now and then, if only to maintain their recognition of something beyond themselves. They want spirituality; they even possess a limited spirituality. Bradley is right, however, in saying that she cannot lay claim to devotion. She is even aware that what she has and perhaps what she even wants is not the spirituality that the Church would give her. Bradley's friends even wonder if something is amiss. She is aware that her faith is only marginal. In my pastoral experience, this marginal faith is much more rampant than pastors care to admit. Pantheistic faith explains orthodoxy without devotion. Pantheistic faith explains the cool reception received by those who explain how to eradicate sin. Religion without devotion explains the worry (and sometimes-palpable fear) that people feel when they encounter a pastor who hears from a personal God.

Moralistic Pantheism in Detail

I observe many Church-going people who possess a marginal faith. The pantheistic division of marginal faith usually comes in one of two forms. Alice Mann talks about Golden Rule Christians who seek to offend no one (34). Usually, God the

Father is, for them, the exacting and punishing God of the Old Testament. He is harsh, cruel, and warlike to the human race. Jesus the Son is the one who gave people a simple faith. A person simply has to follow the Golden Rule. “Do to others as you would have them do to you” (Luke 6:31, NRSV). For them, Jesus the Son died on the cross in order to save humanity from God the Father—not to save people from their sins. The Holy Spirit is sense of well being they get inside when they realize that they have not offended anyone that day. They practice their faith by not offending anyone else.

A second branch of moralistic pantheism is Good Samaritan Christians. Good Samaritan Christians seek to do a good turn daily. For Good Samaritan Christians, God the Father is the hard taskmaster that gave humanity the Ten Commandments. Jesus, the Great Example, went around helping people. The experience of the Holy Spirit is the sense of well being people get when they help someone. Like Golden Rule Christians, Good Samaritan Christians completely miss the personal encounter with a living God. God is, at most, a spark of the divine that people stimulate when they rise above their base instincts.

Deism

A form of deism exists intermingled with pantheism in American churches. Deism comes with a desire to explain the faith in rationalistic terms. Worship services become more intellectual experiences than heart felt experiences. People come to church and talk about what they learned (or did not) from the sermon that day. The thought of encountering a personal God is far from their minds. Deism fits in well with a moral religion. After all, a moral religion is easy to understand and explain.

Another form of deism, or at least a practiced deism, is especially tragic. Some

trinitarian people are convinced that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit exist. Some Christians believe the Trinity is active in the world today, but not for them. Many times when people attend a Walk to Emmaus, they are amazed that God loves them, and that God would relate to them. They believe that God loves and relates to other people—but not for themselves.

The Pervasiveness of the Problem

In the literature, one will sometimes encounter someone who has discovered, at least in part, the truths described here. Douglas F. Ottati states that there exist “probably more nontrinitarians in the pews of officially trinitarian churches than we often realize” (1044). Another example comes from Richard A. Busch. He notices something tragically wrong with the faith of clergy:

I invite participants (clergy) to tell their stories—to share with their peers how they understand God to have been acting in their lives over the years. There is a great deal of excitement as people prepare to reflect upon their particular journeys. These reflections are offered in a group whose members demonstrate care, encouragement and a lack of competition. (Some are doing this for the very first time.) We are introduced to past events, specific times and places, recognizable characters and different communities; we are also opened to others’ pain and joy, tears and laughter, brokenness and celebration. The impact is powerful and never fails to touch our hunger for intimacy. Yet the goal of the assignment, to share how God has been acting in their lives, is not always realized. Traditional Christian language is rarely woven into the narrative. At least 80 percent of the personal stories do not integrate the individual’s life with the Christian faith. The vocabulary has a professional, ecclesiastical or psychological flavor. Because the narratives are powerful, and the connections and associations resonate among the listeners, many fail to notice what is missing. (316)

Their faith resembles psychobabble. These clergy (at least 80 percent of them) are not overtly Christian at all. These pastors have reduced their spiritual lives to overcoming life’s difficulties or living in life’s difficulties. As hard as integrating life and faith is,

integrating ministry and faith is harder. Pastors must pray through, not merely about, situations in the church. Pastors must have a clarion call to ministry, or the demands of church life will hold them hostage. Pastors must have God's presence and assistance as they walk into a pulpit, an ICU ward, the home of a bereaving family, or a church council. In short, pastors must possess a relationship with God that extends far beyond the point of integrating faith and life.

Busch, however, is not finished. He describes the situation on the lay side of the church as worse:

I often receive telephone calls from parish search committees, which are inquiring about the qualifications of someone who has participated in one of our programs and is now being considered for a position. The callers follow a predictable pattern. They ask about a candidate's capabilities as pastor, preacher, organizer, educator, motivator, liturgist. Some may ask about sexual orientation or about the person's concern for the marginalized. Yet they do not raise questions about the candidate's faith. I may volunteer an unsolicited comment: "I know you haven't asked me, but the person you are thinking of calling is a deeply Christian person. Christ is at the center of her ministry." After that remark there is usually a pause, and then the caller continues. "Good. Now, how about stewardship?" (316)

Solidly Christian people would ask about a candidate's faith. At best, these laypeople are assuming a pastor's spirituality. At worst, their theology rests upon a non-Christian foundation. Performance is the basis of judgment, not character. These pastoral search committees trade a pastoral candidate's abilities for the soul of the potential pastor. I fear that too many of these churches are getting exactly what they want. This train of thought raises a question about the theological beliefs of the average Christian layperson.

George Barna has done the Christian church a favor by surveying the beliefs of American Christians and doing so based upon denominational preference. Table 2.1

shows Barna's findings that, indeed, the theological foundation of the average American layperson is in poor shape. This table summarizes Barna's questions as follows: the Bible is a totally accurate document, must tell faith to others, religious faith is important, Satan is real, works don't earn heaven, Christ was sinless, God is the all-powerful Creator and absolutely committed to Christianity. The abbreviations are as follows: Advent. is Adventist churches, A of G is Assembly of God, Cat. is Catholic, C of C is Church of Christ, Ep. is Episcopalian, Lut. is Lutheran, Met. is Methodist, Mor. is Mormon, Non. is Non-denominational, Pent. is Pentecostal, and Pres. is Presbyterian.

Table 2.1. Religious Beliefs by Denominations (%)

	Bible is totally accurate	must tell faith to others	relig. faith is import.	Satan is real	works don't earn Heaven	Christ was sinless	God: all- powerful Creator	Ab. Commit to Christ
All	41	32	68	27	30	40	69	41
Advent.	64	42	73	37	32	45	76	53
A of G	77	61	86	56	64	70	96	66
Baptist	66	51	81	34	43	55	85	58
Cat.	26	17	68	17	9	33	70	43
C of C	57	51	81	36	42	54	80	59
Ep.	22	12	60	20	26	28	59	46
Luth.	34	27	63	21	27	33	72	55
Met.	38	28	74	18	24	33	73	47
Mor.	29	55	90	59	15	70	84	NA
Non.	70	59	86	48	60	63	89	67

Pent.	81	73	94	47	62	73	90	66
Pres.	40	33	71	22	31	45	76	60

Source: Barna.

Though Barna's questions do not deal with pantheism and deism per se, they do give indications. This section looks at each of his questions and relates them to the topic at hand. This section deals with the questions in the order of positive answers for Methodists.

First, "God is an all-powerful Creator." Only 69 percent of all people in the survey believed in God in this way. Of the remaining 31 percent, an unknown number are closet pantheists, deists, or atheists; however, pantheism is what one would expect to find in this group. Of the 69 percent, a large percentage may be deists. Deism does allow for an all-powerful Creator; however, that Creator is not presently active in this world. Of course, some of these people are probably pantheists. These people could be convinced that God is the force of Evolution working in the world. Barna's research cannot tell for certain, though the remaining questions do give some indications.

The next highest response, "religious faith is important" professed by 68 percent of the overall population. One cannot tell much from this question. After all, respondents fail to tell what kind of faith they possess. One cannot tell if Christianity, deism, pantheism, or whether some synergy between two of them or all three of them is indicated. Further, the responders did not tell Barna why faith is important. One cannot tell if faith is unimportant because sin has a major influence in their lives or if the responders are apathetic. Pantheism and deism reduces faith in people's lives. No doubt,

some of these respondents suffer from a reduced faith. One simply cannot tell from this question. The next question, “absolutely committed to Christianity,” does not give much information either. Of the entire population, 41 percent answered this question affirmatively. This number roughly equates to those who attend church on a regular basis. People attend church for many reasons. Some come because they need reinforcement to live a moral life, others because they want to live a life full of the presence of God. Of the 59 percent who did not answer this question affirmatively, some adhere to other belief systems than Christianity. Even those who understand that they are Christian in their beliefs but are really pantheists or deists have a hard time being absolutely committed to their faith. In my experience, they usually include something wrong within their faith. This fault in their faith causes them to be committed in a limited way; however, some of the respondents cling to sin or otherwise indisposed to Christianity at present.

The fourth highest question, “[I]s the Bible totally accurate in all matters of faith and practice?” was answered affirmatively by 41 percent of the adult population. If a person believes that the Bible is accurate, then pantheism and deism become problematic. One cannot read the Bible, believe that the Word is totally accurate, and remain a pantheist or a deist for long. Of the 59 percent who answered this question negatively, very high percentages are likely to be pantheists or deists. Of the 41 percent who did answer positively, a significant number of them could be pantheists or deists and have simply not read their Bibles. The fifth most affirmative question found 40 percent of the entire population saying, “Christ is sinless.” If one is a pantheist or deist, then Christ does not have to be sinless. Indeed, both pantheism and deism would deny both the divinity of Christ and the necessity of his sinless death on humanity’s behalf.

The sixth most affirmatively answered question, “must tell faith to others,” stated the belief of 32 percent of the population. This question does not tell much about the reason for the belief; however, pantheists and deists generally do not feel a need to share their faith. Such believers’ faith is, by definition, personal in the sense that their faith is individualistic. A pantheist or deist expresses their faith differently from another pantheist or deist; therefore, they possess no real need to share personal faith. Some pantheists and deists do share their faith even though their belief system does not give them a compelling reason to do so. In my experience, quite a few people do not share their faith because of sinful rebellion.

The seventh highest affirmative answer is that “works do not earn heaven.” Of the adult population, 70 percent did believe that works do earn heaven. A pantheist or deist must have works to earn heaven. I believe that this question is the truest measure, given by Barna’s survey, of the presence of pantheism and deism in the American population. Fewer Methodists believe in a grace-filled salvation than the population as a whole. This pattern is consistent with the mentality of persons in mainline denominations mentioned earlier and certainly consistent with the Llano Estacado region.

The eighth and final question asks if “Satan is real.” In the American population, 73 percent did not believe that Satan is real. In my experience, people who do not believe in a personal devil may believe in an evil force, presence, or attitude. All of these words describe Satan in pantheistic terms, not even in deistic terms. As pantheism and deism do describe beliefs about God, not Satan, and because people do sometimes believe in a personal God and a pantheistic devil, these figures do not necessarily indicate pantheism and deism. Nevertheless, if a person believes in a pantheistic devil, then the change to a

belief in a pantheistic god is easier. Therefore, I believe that American culture's slide into pantheism is not yet complete. Many Americans are pre-pantheists, as noted in their belief about Satan. Among Methodists, disbelief in Satan is higher than in the population as a whole. Unfortunately, the Methodist movement possesses more pre-pantheists than does the country. Finally, I observe that the mainline denominations are as bad as or worse than the population as a whole. Belonging to a mainline denomination does not seem to be much of an antidote to being a pantheist or a deist. The conservative denominations have fewer pantheists or deists in their midst. In addition, because the United Methodist Church is the only mainline denomination with significant numbers in the Llano Estacado region of the United States, I believe that the numbers are lower for Methodists in this region of the country than for the country as a whole. Someone should test this region of the United States, but that issue is beyond the purview of this dissertation project.

Properly labeling is not important. People are important, to God and to the Church. Individuals deserve more than a label; however, when one realizes the depth of the slide of the American church in general and Methodism in particular, one sees the need to grow people in trinitarian belief and practice.

In American churches, one finds pantheism sometimes mixed in with a rationalistic deism. Frequently, this pantheism receives guidance from the moral principles of Christendom; nevertheless, this faith is pantheism nonetheless. In many churches, moralistic pantheism is even the accepted norm in preaching. While in Muleshoe, the chair of the Pastor Parish Relations Committee once told me, "Our people are used to hearing sermons about how we relate to our fellow human beings. You keep

giving us sermons about how we relate to God. It isn't selling well" (King). The members who complained about the sermons wanted to hear that they were good people and to go out and do good deeds in the world. The members who complained about the sermons knew that God the Father made them. The members who grumbled about the sermons did not see the need for the cross (i.e., they were not sinners after all). For the members who complained about the sermons, God the Son is a wonderful example to follow but very little else. God the Spirit was only a good feeling that they obtained from not offending someone or from doing a good deed. Worst of all, the complainers were convinced that they were superior Christians.

A large gap exists between the theological understandings of orthodoxy and the common belief in many mainline churches. Many factors work to cause this situation. These factors include the cultural shift in American society, the lack of spiritual direction, the Western view of the Trinity, the prevalence of non-trinitarian worship, the rationalistic emphasis of liberal and conservative Christianity, and overall church health.

The Cultural Shift

American culture is shifting from modernism to postmodernism. Each view supports its own variety of paganism. The modern view, with its emphasis on rationalistic thought, inclines toward deism. Everything should be understandable; therefore, the supernatural becomes *de facto* excluded. In postmodernism, all of creation stands interrelated. This interrelatedness extends to the trees, rocks, animals, and people. Thus, postmodernism not only inclines toward pantheism, postmodernism is pantheistic. Because of the cultural shift, most people are on a continuum between modernism and postmodernism at this time.

The Lack of Spiritual Direction

Some of the process that drives Christians to pantheism is the lack of spiritual direction. Eugene H. Peterson describes one such process this way:

All men and women hunger for God. The hunger is masked and misinterpreted in many ways, but it is always there. Everyone is on the verge of crying out “My Lord and my God!” but the cry is drowned out by doubts or defiance, muffled by the dull ache of their routines, masked by their cozy accommodations with mediocrity. Then something happens—a word, an event, a dream—and there is a push toward awareness of an incredible Grace, a dazzling Desire, a defiant Hope, a courageous Faithfulness. But awareness, as such, is not enough. Untended, it trickles into religious sentimentalism or romantic blubbery. Or, worse, it hardens into patriotic hubris or pharisaic snobbery. The pastor is there to nudge the awareness past subjectivities and ideologies into the open and say “God.” (87)

If that pastor, or someone, does not nudge, then that awareness of God remains undefined, unrefined, and slides down into an awareness that resembles pantheism more than Christianity. A tendency to be one’s own spiritual mentor exacerbates this problem. On a whole, people in church do not look for spiritual guidance. The church and its leaders find their way out of paganism and into orthodoxy by being explicitly trinitarian. Unfortunately, a misshapen view of the Trinity and bad worship practices by officially trinitarian churches have contributed to the slide toward pantheism and deism.

The Western View of the Trinity

The predominant Western view of the Trinity is the thought of the Trinity being a mental puzzle depicted as a triangle (Cladis 5). The mental puzzle approach to the Trinity attempts to understand the Trinity rationally. This rationalistic tendency produces within Christianity an inclination toward deism. Certainly, in my own life, I have had the tendency toward a practicing deism. I have wanted, at times, to understand an aspect of the faith before practicing it. The church should commend those who seek to understand.

One cannot argue with thinking about God; however, explaining the Trinity is something the Bible does not seek to do. Instead, the biblical writers sought to experience all three persons of the Trinity in spite of their lack of understanding. The Western view of the Trinity has helped maintain the rationalistic side of the faith to the detriment of the experiential side of the faith. This shift toward rationalism has made the Church more susceptible to deism. In contrast, the Eastern view of the Trinity emphasizes the experiential end (Cladis 5). They believe that people are to experience all three persons of the Trinity as a way of understanding the Trinity on a heart-felt level. A balance between the Eastern and Western views is the most biblically based and can lead to much sounder church health. Most churches fail to provide trinitarian worship and thus lead people into non-trinitarian thinking.

The Prevalence of Non-Trinitarian Worship

To understand non-trinitarian worship, one must first understand trinitarian worship. Trinitarian worship consists of a part that relates to God the Father, a part that relates to God the Son, and a part that relates to God the Spirit. When a worshipper is in the presence of God the Father, then awe is the reaction that we feel (e.g., Isa. 6). Therefore, those parts of the worship service that compel a worshipper to experience God in an awe-inspiring way relate to God the Father. People also relate to God the Father when they think about the faith. He is the one who puts order into the universe. When worshippers are in the presence of God the Son, they come to him by making a decision to be obedient to his will and be involved in his life. Therefore, those parts of a worship service that ask people to make a decision for Jesus relates to God the Son. When worshippers are in the presence of God the Spirit, they experience God's power and feel their hearts strangely

warmed. In practice, these three portions of worship are intermingled. Indeed any part of the liturgy can allow people to experience all three persons of the Trinity. Nevertheless, most worship services center on only one or two persons of the Trinity.

In the Llano Estacado region, almost all worship services emphasize only one person of the Trinity; very few strike a balance. Among mainline churches, the predominant or traditional way of worship in the Llano Estacado region is mind centered. Church is nothing more than a lecture that imparts knowledge. In such churches, the hymns become teaching elements, and their effectiveness judged by their ability to teach theology. Trinitarian worship, on the other hand, makes use of people's minds (God the Father), people's wills (God the Son), and people's spirits (God the Spirit). Baptist churches in the region tend to emphasize the saving aspect of the faith and thus frequently call for a decision for Jesus. This emphasis on the aspect of worship that calls for a choice relates to God the Son. Charismatic churches tend to place the emphasis on experiencing God in the here and now and having his power overcome the worshipper. This emphasis on the experiential part of worship relates to God the Spirit and is just as out of balance as the other two. As discussed later in this chapter, Baptist churches and charismatic churches are not as pantheistic and deistic than other mainline churches; nevertheless, these tendencies in worship style explain pantheism and deism in Baptist and charismatic churches. Thus, the Connected in Christ instrument sought to measure a church's trinitarian worship experience (see Appendix C).

Other Potential Carriers of Pantheism and Deism

Another potential carrier of pantheism and deism is the rise of theological liberalism. Liberalism has promoted deism in at least two ways. First, liberalism

discounts the supernatural. Second, the rationalistic emphasis of theological liberalism has played along with deism's desire for life and faith to be completely explainable.

Another potential carrier of the pagan disease is the rise of scholasticism in conservative Christianity. Some people use a strict orthodoxy as the measure of true faith. Sometimes, apologetics has had an answer for everything instead of providing a way to an answer. This emphasis on the head, without a proper balance of the choice that people make for Jesus and the experience that people have of the Spirit, has choked out balance of the faith. In short, rationalism rules many people. This rationalism has led to the unfortunate tendency for orthodoxy to produce a practicing deism. I have heard a form of deism among many on Walks to Emmaus: "I do not and cannot have my thinking correct; therefore, God is not as interested in me as he is in the preacher who does have his thinking correct."

The Prevalence of Non-Healthy Churches

Unhealthy churches are the norm in North America. Of the many measures of unhealthy churches, most people understand a lack of growth. Only 1 percent of North American churches are growing. Of that 1 percent, only 1 percent comes from conversion growth (Hunter, Lecture). If healthy churches grow by conversion growth, then churches are very ill in North America.

The Way Back toward an Orthodox Expression of the Faith

In spite of the desperateness of the situation, God gives us a way back to him in himself—The Holy Trinity.

Biblical Precedents for the Trinity

Three passages deal with the Trinity in a Triadic form: 1 Corinthians 12:4-6,

Ephesians 4:4-6, and 1 Peter 1:2. In these passages, Paul and Peter use trinitarian language in such a way that assumes familiarity (Churchill 91-92). Several passages have no clear Triadic structure. These passages include John 14-16, Mark 1:9-11, Galatians 4:4-6, Romans 8:1ff, 2 Thessalonians 2:13ff, Titus 3:4-6, and Jude 20ff. (Churchill 93). Further, in Jesus' High Priestly prayer in John 17, Jesus describes the relationship of believers to God the Father and God the Son and thus shows how all three persons of the Trinity relate to each other and to Christians. Therefore, for the purpose of this dissertation, I examined John 17:20-26 and John 16:13-15.

John 17:20-26. Jesus prays for believers and reveals his relationship to his

Father:

I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. Righteous Father, the world does not know you, but I know you; and these know that you have sent me. I made your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.
(NRSV)

Here Jesus speaks in philosophical, confusing language. He is praying to God the Father. Jesus prays for believers and in the prayer, he describes his relationship to believers and to his heavenly father. The prayer can be broken down based into three clauses: (1) that they (Christians) may all be one, (2) that they may be in us (Father and Son), and (3) that the world may believe. Thus, Jesus prays for unity and the unity of all

believers in all times. Here, Jesus makes five affirmations that affect church unity: (1) Unity ensures protection by surrounding believers in love; (2) Unity mirrors the unity in the Trinity; (3) A connection exists between the unity of believers and the trinitarian unity; (4) A part of the glory of Christ is the unity of believers; (5) Unity enables evangelistic efforts (Fernando 240-42). John 17 “teaches us that there is a three-fold unity in Christianity: God with Christ, Christ with us, Christians with each other” (242).

The unity of the Father and the Son becomes the means God uses to unify the church. With the *in* phrases of this passage, Christ describes a deep, mutual sharing or interpenetration with his Father based on openness. “The Father is in the Son and does His works. The Son is in the Father. The two are one and yet distinct” (Morris 734). As stated above, I believe that the example of the Father and the Son’s relationship is indicative of the relationship of the whole Trinity to each other. Thus, Father and Son are open with each other, then the believers are open with the Son and thus with the whole Trinity. Nevertheless, limits to this interpenetration of believers with the Father and the Son exist. Believers, for example, never have eternal life outside of the Trinity. Living in Jesus gives one that kind of life. The persons of the Trinity do have that kind of life outside of people; however, for humanity, the exchange is a one sided. This fact explains why Jesus’ prayer for Christians is that Christians be in the Father and the Son. In addition, Christian unity is not like the unity of the Father and Son. The Father and Son have unity regardless because they unite in their essence and by their choice to be in relation with each other. For Christians, union with the Father and the Son achieves Christian unity (Dongell 207). Thus, the analogy is not complete, but the metaphor helps to explain the kind of relationship that Jesus wishes believers have with the Trinity.

The interpenetration of the Trinity, however, does not extend to mission. As an example, Gerald Stephen Sloyan states, “Johannine glory is based on a remarkable reciprocity between Father and Son except when it comes to mission. The Son never sends to the Father and Spirit-paraclete does not send anyone” (197). Thus, the Trinity is equal, yet different. They are achieving the same goal, yet they are on different missions, different tasks as part of that goal. Their goal is the same in regards to the church. The goal of the church’s unity is to allow the world to know the greatness of God. Thus, Christians are to be in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in order that others may be in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

John 16:13-15. Jesus explains the roles of the Father, Son, and Spirit:

When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine. For this reason I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you. (NRSV)

In this passage, Jesus describes the relationship between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Father is the beginning; things progress from him to the Son and then from the Father and the Son to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will glorify the Son by taking what is the Son’s and giving the same to the church. The Son has what he possesses because the Father has given it to him. This passage illustrates the dance of relationships between the three persons of the Trinity. The three persons have their start in the Father, who gives everything to the Son, while the two then give everything to the Spirit (Carson 541). The Father, Son, and Spirit are equal in that they share in all things. The Father is the ultimate head and authority, however, the persons of the Trinity relate as equals.

The Holy Spirit distributes the teaching of the Father and the Son in his own way by bringing it to remembrance (Ridderbos 536). The Holy Spirit thus becomes the mediator between Christians and Jesus and through Jesus to God the Father (536).

The analysis of the above two passages brings up many interesting and important theological questions.

What Is a Person?

Because Americans live in the emerging postmodern world, one must define personhood. In the past, self-awareness defined personhood. M. William Ury states that Wesley's beliefs about the Trinity and personhood provides more implications for the postmodern world than any other present theological system (31). Ury further states that the Wesleyan position on personhood rests on the two main attributes of God, holiness and love (32). To be holy is to love; however, holiness assumes one ability—the ability to choose. God chooses to love. The Deity chooses to relate to others. The Divine persons choose to be holy. Because God created human beings in his image, men and women have a choice.

The ability to choose is not the same thing as the ability to love. God could choose to lie or to tell the truth and still be incapable of love. Ury states that to love means to give to another, to receive from another, and to share with another or to complete the other (54). When one person of the Trinity gives to another person of the Trinity, that person gives something of himself or herself. That something may be their thoughts, or their emotions. The persons of the Trinity choose to give these things to each other as a means of giving of themselves. They receive from another as they seek to give to each other. The Divine persons also choose to accept the gift of others. The members

of the Trinity share with each other not only when they give a minor part of themselves or receive from another, but also when they choose to share their lives with another. They choose to be so intimately intertwined with another that their giving and their receiving is close to totality. A person's sharing with another is the summation of that individual's giving and receiving to and from another.

The individual members of the Trinity's ability to love and the ability to choose as persons shape the rest of theology. In the Trinity, choices occur; in the Trinity, gifts become exchanged; in the Trinity, personalities become shared.

Problem of Trinitarian Doctrine

Many pastors fail to try to explain the Trinity. Explaining the Trinity strains the intellect, so these clergy avoid the issue. As Roderick Leupp states, for many Christians the Trinity is "a riddle wrapped up inside a puzzle and buried in an enigma" (Leupp 16). Many Christians believe a person cannot understand therefore, one should not try to understand the Trinity.

Nevertheless, the early church fathers did not view the Trinity as only a dilemma. Graham Scott explains the position of the early father this way:

In their fidelity to the Bible, the Fathers (and Mothers, sic) did not teach a static monad, but rather a God so great as to be incomprehensible. Their apophatic or negative theology kept the remembrance of God as the holy One, whose thoughts are quite beyond ours (Isa. 55:8-9) and whose being, rightly called Light can only be found through the darkness (Ps 18:9-12).
(116)

One needs to maintain the incomprehensibility of the Trinity. Indeed, the Scriptures do not seek to explain the Trinity; the Scriptures only ask people to experience the Trinity. The Church's emphasis should be on experiencing the triune God (Scott 113). Completely understanding the Trinity limits a person's experience of the Trinity and thus

that person's existence. Human language will never be able to adequately define or explain God.

Importance of Trinitarian Doctrine

Ecclesiology demands precise definitions of the Trinity. Timothy Ware states, "Since belief in the Trinity lies at the very heart of the Christian faith, a tiny difference in trinitarian theology is bound to have repercussions upon every aspect of Christian life and thought" (218-19). This thought makes trinitarian doctrine the most important doctrine of the church. However, trinitarian doctrine is the hardest doctrine to define. Yet, if believers give up on understanding this doctrine, then they cast themselves to the winds of all kinds of heretical doctrines for everything springs from a person's belief about God. As hard as understanding the Trinity is, Christians must venture forth. Without an understanding of the Trinity, Christians fail not only in theology, but also in church life.

Content of Trinitarian Doctrine

The Trinity is a complex theological doctrine; therefore, one must break the doctrine down into parts.

God Is One

The greatest mystery of the Trinity is that God is one and yet three. The mystery of the Trinity has divided Christians and divided denominations since 1054 CE. Since Augustine, the Western church has tended to emphasize the substance of God being the unifying factor of the Trinity. This tendency has allowed the Western church to slip into a strict monotheism and from there into pantheism. The Eastern Church, while agreeing that the Trinity is unified in substance, has and does place the emphasis of understanding the Trinity on the threeness of the Trinity; a threeness of equal, and unified persons.

The answer lies in the term *perichoresis*. *Perichoresis* means, literally, “making room for each other” (Ury 42) and is sometimes described as the circle dance (Dearborn 545). The idea here is a mutual interpenetration and sharing with each other that almost makes the three persons indistinguishable. As described above, the Father is in Jesus, and Jesus is in the Father. They make room for each other and dance with each other; and thus, they become a part of each other. God the Father, God the Son and God the Spirit would be incomplete without each other but are complete with each other. Each person of the Trinity chooses to love completely the other two. Nevertheless, the relationship is not tight simply because they share substance (even though they share substance). The relationship is close because they choose to love. They choose to walk in holiness. Their relational unity, while subordinate to their ontological unity, enhances and expands their ontological unity in the sense that their relational unity puts their ontological unity into practice. This view allows the theologian to maintain the personhood of each divine person while maintaining the essential unity of substance of the Trinity. East merges with West. Unity of substance and relationships of persons receive equal stress.

God Is Three

As seen above, while the Trinity is one God, the three persons are one God while they are three. Each person gives to each other, receives from each other, and shares with each other. Further, the giving, receiving, and sharing are a matter of choice. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit do not have to choose to love each other, but they do so choose.

God Is Community

The above definition of three persons in one substance means, of course, that the persons of the Trinity are a community. In fact, the Trinity’s community is what defines

community. The Three Persons live with each other and they live for each other. Of all of the aspects of trinitarian thought, this aspect is most important: the Trinity is community. As seen below, ecclesiology revolves around this one point.

God Is Humility

The persons of the Trinity give deference to each other. The Father glorifies the Son (John 15:5). The Son glorifies the Father (John 14:13; 17:5). The Spirit glorifies the Son (John 17:14). They constantly seek to make certain that another person of the Trinity gets glory. With humility, the persons of the Trinity operate with each other. With deference, they dance with each other and share their lives with each other. With humbleness, they work together to achieve the salvation of the world.

God Is Diversity

Yet, in spite of the oneness of God, diversity exists. God the Father is not God the Spirit. Jesus dies on the Cross crying, “My God, My God why have you forsaken me” (Mark 15:34, NRSV). Yet God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself (Rom. 5:10). In John 14:11, Jesus tells us that he and the Father are one. Jesus states this fact because many persons miss his unity with the Father. Many people notice that the Son and the Father are separate. They are different and distinct even though their unity exists. Thus, great diversity exists in the Trinity.

God Is Unity

The unity of the Trinity occurs not only by substance but also by having one person in charge. As seen above, the persons of the Trinity are equal in stature and substance. They are so coequal that the Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son. The persons of the Trinity are so equal that the Father’s decision is what the other two

persons would choose if they allowed themselves to have the choice. Nevertheless, the Father makes the decisions. The Father alone knows when Jesus will return (Matt. 24:36). God the Father is primary. However, the persons are equal. As seen above, they are equal in substance and relationship to the point that the Father, in humility, gives deference to the Son and to the Spirit. This view of relationships of the persons of the Trinity is critical when one considers the topic of ecclesiology.

Trinity and the Kingdom of God

Jesus said, “[T]he Kingdom of God has come near you” (Matt. 3:2, NRSV). Howard A. Snyder has done the Church a remarkable service by explaining the different models for the kingdom that Christians have and are using in their ministry. Among these are the kingdom of God as a future hope, an inner spiritual experience, and a mystical communion. As a future hope, believers will see the completion of the Kingdom later (25-39). Certainly, the kingdom of God is an inner spiritual experience as God rules in the human heart (40-55). Christians come into a relationship with the Trinity, and they enter into communion with the Trinity. The three persons come to be within a believer as Christians come to be within them. Moreover, as a new Christian enters into communion with the Trinity, they enter into the mystical communion of all the saints because the saints unite with the Trinity as well (56-66). Believers connect to each other by being in communion with the Trinity together, and with other believers who have lived before, at the same time or in the future. Community, then, is the apex of kingdom. The other aspects of being in the Kingdom of God lead to a believer’s communion with their fellow Christians because they are in communion with the ultimate community—the Holy Trinity.

“Now such a union with the Trinity means union with the divine energies not the divine essence. We do not become the Father or the Son or the Holy Spirit; rather we share so intimately in their life-creating energies that we are joined to them, and that even in this union we still remain ourselves” (Timiadis 128). Believers share in the energies but not in the substance. This sharing is what Peter meant when he said, “[W]e shall be partakers of the divine nature.” (2 Pet. 1:4, NRSV)

Trinity and Ecclesiology

Ajith Fernando states, “In the New Testament, there is a close relationship between the nature of the church and the Trinity” (240). This close relationship occurs for many reasons, but one is that the Trinity and the church are communities. An examination of ecclesiology in light of the Trinity shows this similarity most clearly.

Substance means that the universal Church connects to the local church as equals. The general boards and agencies are not superior to the local church. A hierarchy of persons exists in the Trinity, not on the level of importance or superiority, but on a level of role. Therefore, the local church is never a lesser part of the whole nor is the laity a lesser part of the local church. The only difference is one of role, not of substance.

Miroslav Volf, in writing about the Trinity and the church has said, “The future of the church in God’s creation is the mutual personal indwelling of the triune God and of his glorified people, as becomes clear from the description of the new Jerusalem in the Apocalypse of John (Rev. 21:1-22:5)” (128). In heaven, the true potential of this ecclesiology will shine clearly. Christians will dwell with the Trinity perfectly in the heaven and thus will be a perfect church. In the present, in the time of the Kingdom that is but is not, the church and the Trinity unite only imperfectly. Nevertheless, the union is

real though imperfect.

Church Is Community

Just as the Trinity is in *perichoritic* relationship with each other, so is the church. Believers are a part of one another whether they acknowledge it or not or whether they realize it or not. Christians connect to one another through their connection with the Trinity. Each believer, individually, enters into the *perichoritic* dance of the Trinity and thus with other believers. The circle dance transcends normal human distinction and separations:

Only through the empowering presence of the trinitarian God can the barriers of race, gender, ethnicity, and human/nonhuman in creation break down. And this is happening! It is the Spirit who brings us into this new social reality of the church, the ecclesia of Jesus, the Son. As members of this eschatological society, we become the Father's priests between the trinitarian God and all the rest of creation. It is this Spirit who now impels the called-out people of God into a broken cosmos to live as incarnated witnesses. (Roxburgh 188)

With the empowerment of the circle dance, Christians come together and show the world the greatness of a diverse community. Indeed, the faithful cannot live truly as Christians without each other. "As Christians however, human beings cannot live apart from fellowship with other Christians. Salvation has an indispensable ecclesial structure, and in this sense relations between trinitarian and ecclesial person do correspond" (Volf 207). This community gives the church strength amidst diversity.

Church Hierarchy

A hierarchy of function exists, but not substance within the Trinity. God the Father is in the authority role, particularly in the Western sense, but he is not ontologically superior to the Son and the Spirit. Therefore, churches should have a hierarchy of function, but not substance within the church. This hierarchy means church

polity can include Bishops; however, they are a leader among equals. The true authority resides in the whole community, even when a bishop makes decisions for the whole community. Thus, in the United Methodist system, bishops preside and decide. They are only ordained as elders; they cannot go on their whims but must stay within the parameters of the community when making decisions. This distinction also means that the misgivings United Methodist elders have over the number of local pastors is unwarranted. Local pastors are equal with elders. In the same vein, the current distinction between clergy and laity is theologically askew. Clergy and laity have difference of function, not substance. Clergy should not lord over laity because of their ordination. Likewise, laity should not feel or act like less important citizens in the church.

Church Is Diverse

Throughout the centuries, the church maintains unity with diversity:

How, despite so many attacks by pagans, by heretics one after the other, by unworthy bishops who even surrendered to heretical bodies, did the Church remain true, one and apostolic? The answer is found in the fact that, in spite of radical changes and upheavals, she was protected and guided in all the vicissitudes of history by the blessed Trinity. (Timiadis 151)

The Trinity is composed of three distinct yet united persons. They are diverse and that diversity lends strength to the whole. In like manner, the Church is diverse. That diversity lends strength to the whole. Unlike the Trinity, the Church is human as well (Timiadis 151). This understanding means that the diversity in the Church is an intermingling of sinful and holy elements. The wonder of the Church being in a *perichoritic* dance with the Trinity means that God is redeeming even the sinful elements of the Church to be used to His glory. Therefore, believers celebrate their diversity, although that diversity is costly and sometimes sinful. God is bigger than the Church and God is working in the

Church to his glory and the Church's sanctification.

Further, Christians need each other. An eye cannot function as an ear or as a foot (1 Cor. 12:14-27). God has designed believers to be in relationship to each and in constant need of each other. Together, the faithful are stronger even if they appear to be weaker.

Church Is Love

The Trinity is the ultimate example of self-giving love to each other. Likewise, the Church should be the example of self-giving love to each other and to the world, which does not know Jesus. The more individually and collectively the Church lives in the circle dance of the Trinity, the more love and holiness express itself in the Church. People love and are able to love because Christ first loved them (1 John 4:19).

Church Is Humility

The persons of the Trinity show a preference of honor and respect to each other. In like manner, Christians should always be showing a preference of honor to each other. The clergy show honor and respect to the non-ordained. No room exists for one layperson to exhibit arrogance to another layperson for any reason. People should go out of their way to show respect and honor to others. The showing of preference to each other extends to the point of looking for the interest of others ahead of one's own. A life of holiness demands no less; a full life in the Trinity will produce no less.

Because of the above discussion of the Trinity and ecclesiology, the Connected in Christ portion of the church wide survey seeks to measure church life, the individual believers' spiritual practice, and trinitarian belief (see Appendix C). As the church experiences the Trinity, then pantheism and deism diminish. As pantheism and deism

diminish, church health improves. The Beeson Church Health Survey measures improvement in church health as the local church experiences the Trinity in Community (see Appendix A).

Church Health Schemes

Brian A. Law, James Kinder, Keith Taylor, and Scott McKee compiled a list of church health schemes from the literature (see Tables 2.2 and 2.3). They broke these church schemes down into primary sources and secondary sources and compared them with a post 2000 scheme called the Beeson Church Health Characteristics.

Table 2.2. Church Health Schemes Prior to 2000 (Primary Sources)

Hemphill	Macchia	Schwarz	Wagner	Leadership Network	Beeson Characteristics
Servant leaders	Servant-leadership development	Gift-oriented ministry	A well mobilized laity	Lay mobilization	Mobilized laity
Christ-exalting worship	God-exalting worship	Inspiring worship service			Engaging worship
Passion for the lost	Outward focus	Need-oriented evangelism	Effective evangelistic methods	Responsible evangelism	Intentional evangelism
Kingdom family relationships	Loving and caring relationships	Loving relationships	Meeting members' needs	Authentic community	Authentic community
Maturation of believers	Learning and growing in community	Holistic small groups	A common homogenous denominator		Transforming discipleship
God-connecting prayer	Spiritual disciplines	Passionate spirituality			Passionate spirituality
God-sized vision	Wise administration and accountability	Empowering leadership	A positive pastor	Effective leadership	Empowering leadership
Supernatural power	God's empowering				

Stewardship and generosity		Celebration, congregation, and cell			
Networking with the body of Christ	Functional structures	Biblical priorities	Cultural connectedness	Functional structures	

Source: Law 37; Kinder 41.

Law and Kinder believe Table 2.3 to be secondary sources. They used as their basis the relative impact of these church health schemes on the Christian Church as a whole. I include them here because of the possibility of the impact of these schemes upon the Church to grow in the future. With the establishment of the Beeson church health characteristic survey, I especially believe that the Beeson church health characteristics will gain influence in the years ahead.

Table 2.3. Characteristics of Church Health Secondary Sources before 2000

Eclov	Spader & Mayes	Anderson	Singletary	Galloway	Beeson Characteristic
Holiness in dealing with sin	Atmosphere of love	Glorifying God	Strong emphasis on prayer	Clear-cut vision	Mobilized laity
Endurance, "over-comers"	Relational ministry	Producing disciples	Obvious ministry of the Holy Spirit	Passion for the lost	Engaging worship
Confront evil and heresy	Communicate Christ clearly	Exercising spiritual gifts	Biblical balance	Shared ministry together	Intentional evangelism
Exclusive love for God	Good health image	Reproducing through evangelism	Individual and organic reproduction	Empowering leadership	Authentic community
Corporate growth ministry	Prayer	Incorporating newcomers	High level of mobilization	Fervent spirituality	Transforming discipleship
Love for one another	Communicate the	Open to change	Qualitative and quantitative	Flexible and functional	Passionate spirituality

word	growth	structures
Trusting God	Healthy body life	Celebrative worship
Looking good on the outside		Connecting small groups
		Seeker friendly evangelism
		Loving relationships

Source: Law 38; Kinder 41.

Each of these schemes, including the Beeson scheme, deals with worship, leadership, spirituality, relationships, God's active presence, evangelism, church structure, and laity participating in the ministry. These characteristics are the common themes. Each different scheme plays to a different aspect of church health, but the overall picture is universal and clear.

Church Health Schemes since 2000

Several new church health schemes have arisen since 2000. Table 2.4 summarizes church health schemes devised since 2000. The following table contains a summary of Olson, Bernard, and Morgan. In this dissertation, I call the Connected in Christ scheme the sixteen-point grid. In Table 2.4, one can see how the eight point Beeson church health scheme folds into the sixteen-point grid of Connected in Christ (abbreviated as CIC). Authentic community is the only characteristic that is identical in both the Beeson scheme and the Connected in Christ scheme. Servant leadership and empowering leadership are virtually identical. The worship that connects with God element of Connected in Christ is similar to the engaging worship characteristic of Beeson. Nurture and pastoring for all fits into the Beeson theme of mobilized laity. Experiencing God,

stewardship of life and Biblical and historical Christianity of Connected in Christ fits in the transforming discipleship characteristic of Beeson. The Connected in Christ themes of teaching Biblical theology, learning for all, spiritual disciplines, justification and sanctification fit the Beeson theme of passionate spirituality. The Connected in Christ characteristics of continual planning, accountability in church life and being United Methodist becomes the Beeson characteristic of functional structures. The Connected in Christ distinctives of outward focus and global Christians folds into the Beeson distinctive of intentional evangelism.

Table 2.4. Church Health Schemes Since 2000

Olson	Bernard	Morgan	CIC	Beeson
	Prayer		Experience God	Transforming discipleship
			Stewardship of li	Transforming discipleship
		Empowering lea	Servant leadershi	Empowering leadership
Strong leader		Senior Pastor Visionary		
	Preaching and Teaching	Relevant preachi		
			Teaching Biblica Theology Learning for all	Passionate spirituality Passionate spirituality
Worship	Power of the Spirit Planning	Exciting worshi	Worship connect with God	Engaging worship
Small group intimacy			Continual planni Authentic Community Spiritual discipli	Functional structu Authentic Community Passionate spirituality
			Justification and Sanctification	Passionate spirituality
Engaged			Biblical, Historic Christianity	Transforming discipleship

Profoundly compassionat	Nurture and Pastoring for all	Mobilized laity
	Outward focus	Intentional evangelism
	Global Christians	Intentional evangelism
	Accountability in church life	Functional Structu
	Be UM	Functional Structu

Source: Olson; Bernard; Morgan; Roberts; Law 38; Kinder 41.

United Methodist Church Connected in Christ

Table 2.5 illustrates the themes of Connected in Christ in fuller detail than in Table 2.4.

Table 2.5. Connected in Christ

Connected in Christ	
seeks to develop spiritually mature churches.	
Spiritually Mature churches have a commitment to...	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. People experiencing God's transforming and empowering presence 2. Worship services that connect people to God 3. Creating authentic community for relationship and for actualization of faith. 4. Emphasis on teaching Biblical theology that illuminates the work of Christ and the Holy Spirit 5. Emphasis on the spiritual disciplines, acts of piety, mercy and justice 6. Biblical and historical Christianity 7. The Wesleyan salvific process of justification and sanctification for spiritual maturity* 8. The United Methodist Church for accountability in local church membership* 9. A continual planning process for pastors and congregations 	

10. A sanctification process that produces learning and growth for all ages in a congregation
 11. Members and participating people who are nurtured and pastored well
 12. Servant leadership amongst clergy and laity
 13. Dedicated outward focus in mission and evangelism
 14. Accountability in all aspects of church life and ministry
 15. Continual active stewardship of life, especially financial resources
 16. Ecumenical co-operation with Global Christianity
-

These 16 points laid the foundation for the development of Connected in Christ.
*Points 7 and 8 in the above list are denominationally specific for the United Methodist Church.

Source: Scott and Scott 2.

As seen above, Connected in Christ's commitment to spiritually mature churches exhibit a commitment to sixteen different criteria. These sixteen points fill out in the following manner. Spiritually mature churches help people experience God's transforming and empowering presence. People receive more than a good lecture in these churches. Christians are changed and changed at a deep level. God seeks to come to people in a transforming and empowering way. Spiritually mature congregations transform people out of a life of sin and empower them to work in the kingdom of God to the glory of God.

Mature congregations provide worship services that connect people to God. A lecture hall and a church are not the same. The worshipper should make a connection with God that is deep, real, and personal during worship. A person should never be able to say, "I have an easier time experiencing God at the golf course than in church."

Spiritually mature churches create authentic community for relationship and for actualization of faith. Small groups come in many forms. The key is that spiritually mature churches foster relationship and the development of the faith. Whether in choir, Sunday school class, a ministry team, or designated small group relationships,

strengthening the faith is a priority.

Mature congregations have an emphasis on teaching biblical theology that illuminates the work of Christ and the Holy Spirit. In the teaching of the church, pantheists or deists become trinitarian theists. Healthy churches teach about the Trinity. The church has to teach more than just how to be moral. Teachers have to give people the fullness of the Christian faith, and that fullness begins in the Godhead.

Spiritually mature congregations place an emphasis on the spiritual disciplines, acts of piety, mercy, and justice. Healthy churches emphasize the means of grace. The spiritual disciplines of prayer, Bible study, baptism, and communion grow into fruition when coupled with good deeds empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Mature congregations emphasize biblical and historical Christianity. The past two hundred years do not constitute the entire Christian tradition. The Christian faith has a deep and long heritage, and the church should participate in all of that tradition. This emphasis keeps the Church away from the Christian fad of the moment.

Spiritually mature churches emphasize the Wesleyan salvific process of justification and sanctification for spiritual maturity. A person needs salvation and cleansing. If a person receives only justification, then they receive only the beginning of life. If the church emphasizes sanctification without justification, then people receive life but not morals.

Mature congregations use the United Methodist Church for accountability in local church membership. When someone joins the United Methodist Church, that person promises to uphold it in four ways: by prayers, by presence, by gifts, and by service. When people attend church, they receive privileges; however, membership brings

responsibilities.

Spiritually mature churches emphasize a continual planning process for pastors and congregations. Planning and execution are never completed; further planning is a team effort between clergy and laity. Leaders are always learning and are always seeking to implement what they have learned.

Mature congregations emphasize a sanctification process that produces learning and growth for all ages in a congregation. Children, youth, and adults should be involved in both learning and growth. Such a process brings people to greater holiness and does so by bringing people closer to the God of holiness.

Spiritually mature churches emphasize pastoring well and nurturing well both members and attendees. A church provides care for people. This care is both pastoral (hospital, grief,) and growth (seeking to gain a deeper grasp on living closer to God).

Mature congregations emphasize servant leadership amongst clergy and laity. A leader should not act with arrogance to followers, but rather, leaders should let service to fellow Christians be the hallmark of leadership. Leaders lead by serving others' needs, not by fulfilling a desire to be in charge.

Spiritually mature congregations dedicate themselves to an outward focus in mission and evangelism. Church exists for the members. Church exists for those who are outside the faith. The Church is in mission to them through social services and by proclaiming the good news of Christ to them.

Mature congregations emphasize accountability in all aspects of church life and ministry. People, who are not accountable to someone, soon run into trouble. Further, ministries that not held to a high standard soon become substandard.

Spiritually mature churches emphasize continual active stewardship of life, especially financial resources. God has given his people everything. Christians own nothing and are stewards of everything. How Christians treat their finances is the clearest, most visible sign that God's people understand this fundamental truth.

Finally, mature congregations emphasize ecumenical cooperation with global Christianity. Methodists are not alone, either as Methodists in the world or in their individual locales. Methodists should connect to a much wider family, the family of God. If Methodists do not cooperate with the rest of the family here on earth, then United Methodists will be out of practice when they get to heaven.

In sum, by adding a trinitarian emphasis, Connected in Christ improves; however, the process's emphasis on teaching the Trinity and a whole spirituality makes Connected in Christ the best option for church health in churches that are unhealthy due to the presence of pantheism and deism. In addition, another flaw in Connected in Christ process is that it does not emphasize the use of spiritual gifts in ministry. This oversight becomes a minimum by the emphasis on the biblical teaching of Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Further, Connected in Christ is flexible enough to make an explicit trinitarianism emphasis possible and to add an emphasis on gift-based ministry in the implementation of Connected in Christ.

Beeson Church Health Characteristics

The eight Beeson Church Health characteristics seek to measure church health with four inwardly focused criteria and four outwardly focused criteria.

Authentic community is a mark of church health. As relationships in a church are cordial and real, they represent a true sign of the Holy Spirit's work in the church.

Empowering leadership is a marker of church health. The leadership of a church empowers the members to engage with the Holy Trinity, and thus, Christians are empowered to work in God's mission in the world. Training is a major factor in church life.

Engaging worship is an indicator of church health. Worship connects people to the Holy Trinity in a real and personal way. Worship can be awe inspiring, convicting, and exciting as it helps people connect to God and other worshippers.

Functional structures indicate church health. A church that makes decisions and changes openly follows in the path of the Holy Trinity. Further, a church should follow the Holy Trinity's leading in ministry to the world.

Intentional evangelism is a mark of church health. The Trinity is out in the world wooing people to join the circle dance. A church should be leading others into this relationship.

Mobilized laity is a marker of church health. Ministry happens not just by the clergy staff of a church but also by all the church members as they are in relationship with the Trinity. The church exists to make lay ministry easier.

Passionate spirituality is an indicator of church health. People expect spiritual growth to be happening because of the Trinity in the church. The church should operate out of the power of God and as individuals in the church relate closely to God.

Transforming discipleship also provides a sign of church health. The church should teach people how to relate to God through the spiritual disciplines. In addition, the church should have a process for developing spiritual gifts in ministry.

Connected in Christ can easily be tested by the Beeson Church Health

Questionnaire as shown by Table 2.4 (p. 44). The sixteen points of Connected in Christ fold into the eight Beeson Church Health characteristics. In addition, the Connected in Christ team survey showed how the team viewed the sixteen-point grid as it pertained to Kingswood United Methodist Church (see Appendix B).

Research Methodology

The Beeson team of Law, Kinder, McKee, and Taylor established the Beeson Church Health Questionnaire and tested it through students and field tests before using it in their dissertation projects. They established guidelines using Robert F. DeVellis's guidelines for scale development (51-89). Their independent variable was church health. They decided on a five-point Likert Scale with one being the highest (Wiersma 182). For the Beeson Church Health Questionnaire, reliability scores are unavailable for reporting.

In order to be consistent, I used the same guidelines to establish the Connected in Christ instrument. The independent variable measured was theological understanding and practice. I took care to make certain that the combined survey did not take longer than thirty minutes to complete. For the Connected in Christ Survey, reliability scores are unavailable for reporting.

I used a program evaluation design in this study. A pretest established a control group as this project was not a random assignment study. This testing allowed us to proceed without issues of validity in a single-group non-random design. (Wiersma 135) With the treatment occurring after the first survey and a change in treatment occurring after the second survey, I measured the difference that the change in treatment made only during the first year of Connected in Christ.

I used surveys of the Connected in Christ team to measure if a lag time existed between the treatment and noticeable improvement. I also used the survey to determine if the Connected in Christ process showed any improvement using the Connected in Christ sixteen-point grid.

Conclusion

Deism and pantheism have infected and infiltrated the Church. Healthy churches are the explicitly trinitarian. The Connected in Christ process within the United Methodist Church is one untested way of becoming a healthy church. Connected in Christ, as understood by its sixteen-point grid, is flawed in that it does not emphasize the use of spiritual gifts in ministry and is not always explicitly trinitarian in all respects. Nevertheless, the Connected in Christ process is adaptable and an explicit trinitarianism can easily be included. With these corrections, Connected in Christ brought about greater church health at Kingswood United Methodist Church in Clovis, New Mexico. I studied the effectiveness of the first year of Connected in Christ to bring about church health.

CHAPTER 3

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study was to determine the effectiveness of the first year of the Connected in Christ process in strengthening the overall church health of Kingswood United Methodist Church and to measure the impact of the Connected in Christ process

upon the theology of the members of Kingswood United Methodist Church. To accomplish this measurement, I tested the church before the first year of the process, mid-way through the first year, and at the end of the first year. I anticipated that this study would show that the Connected in Christ process significantly strengthened the church health of Kingswood United Methodist Church and positively influenced the theology of the members of Kingswood United Methodist Church. I only tested the first year of the Connected in Christ process because of the time restrictions of the dissertation process. I will continue the testing through the second year and will seek to publish the results.

Research Questions

The purpose statement naturally breaks down into two components. The theology of the participants stated and practiced before and after participation in the first year of Connected in Christ. Second, the change the first year of Connected in Christ caused in the church health of Kingswood United Methodist Church. I believe the two components affect each other. A church can only be as healthy as its practicing theology. The first part of research question one provided a baseline for the study while the second part of question one concerned the results of the Connected in Christ process. The pretest provided a baseline for question two also.

Research Question #1

What are the changes in theological beliefs of the participants before participating and after participating in the Connected in Christ process as measured by the Connected in Christ instrument?

I wanted to know the baseline of theological beliefs for Kingswood United Methodist Church. The answer to this question determines if theological beliefs affect the health of a church. This question divides into two parts. First, the church as a whole and, second, the Connected in Christ team of Kingswood United Methodist Church were tested. Connected in Christ has a strong theological teaching element. I wanted to measure the effect of the teaching element of Connected in Christ with the theological beliefs of the church. I divided this question into two parts: first, the church as a whole and second, the Connected in Christ team of Kingswood United Methodist Church.

Research Question #2

What is the change in the church health of Kingswood United Methodist Church by participating in the Connected in Christ process as measured by the Beeson Church Health Questionnaire?

I wanted to know a baseline for the church health of Kingswood United Methodist Church. After establishing a baseline, I desired to measure the effectiveness of the Connected in Christ process in strengthening the overall church health of Kingswood United Methodist Church.

Research Question #3

What was the quality of the experience for the lay Connected in Christ team? This question explored the lay Connected in Christ team's perception of the effectiveness of the Connected in Christ process. I wanted to see if the Connected in Christ process was effective or if church health changed for other reasons. In addition, because the team was more intimately involved in Connected in Christ, the answer to this question gave me, I hoped, a predictor of the direction of the whole church.

As described in Chapter 1, Connected in Christ in the first year at Kingswood United Methodist Church divides into two major areas of emphasis. The first half of the year, measured by the second survey, contained a theological emphasis. The second half of the year contained an emphasis on spirituality.

Participants

The population consisted of those who attended Kingswood United Methodist Church of Clovis, New Mexico, at least once a month in the six months before we started the Connected in Christ process and who were 16 years of age or older. The subset of that population consisted of the Connected in Christ team of Kingswood United Methodist Church.

Variables

The variables were the characteristics of spiritually mature churches as determined by the Connected in Christ process, the culture of the Llano Estacado region of the United States, church health, theological understanding, and the teaching component of Connected in Christ.

Instrumentation

I used the Beeson Church Health Questionnaire (see Appendix A) and a researcher-designed survey (see Appendix C) that I combined into one survey instrument. I gave this survey before the process began, mid-year, and end of year. I also developed an open-ended survey (see Appendix B) that I used with the Connected in Christ team. Finally, I kept a field observation notebook of each Connected in Christ event.

Questionnaire Pretest, Mid-Test, and Posttest

I developed a survey instrument with two parts. For the church health section, I

used the Beeson Church Health Questionnaire (see Appendix A) to determine the church health of Kingswood United Methodist Church. For the theological belief section, I developed a survey instrument (see Appendix C). The two parts became one survey that I mailed three times. The pretest I mailed to all regular attendees (regular meaning attending at least an average of once a month the previous six months) on 4 February 2004. I mailed the mid-test on 19 August 2004 and the posttest on 3 November 2004.

I gave the open-ended survey questionnaire, a listing of sixteen questions, to the Connected in Christ team in groups of four questions (see Appendix B). I gave the open-ended survey at the start of the process and at the end of the first year of Connected in Christ at Kingswood United Methodist Church. I administered the first four groups on 4 April 2004, 18 April 2004, 3 May 2004, and 23 May 2004. The last groups of four I sent via e-mail on 1 November 2004, 8 November 2004, 15 November 2004, and 29 November 2004.

I collected field observation notes throughout the process and especially during each Connected in Christ event.

Data Collection

I collected the data via mail with a cover letter and a self-addressed stamped envelope. I did not send a follow-up letter to non responders. I gave the survey instrument to Dr. Mike Schmidt for analysis on 17 November 2004. I analyzed the open-ended questionnaire. I analyzed the field observation notes. I kept confidentiality and anonymity in the strictest sense. Confidentiality and anonymity were necessary in order to provide for the accuracy of the results. I used a confidential number system. In addition, I secured a permission slip from each person of the Connected in Christ team.

Questionnaire Administration

I administered the tests via mail with a self-addressed stamped envelope and a cover letter. I did not send a follow-up letter. I mailed the tests on 4 February 2004, 19 August 2004, and 3 November 2004. I collected the open-ended questionnaire over the characteristics of spiritually mature churches as determined by Connected in Christ at meetings of the Connected in Christ team.

Data Analysis

Dr. Mike Schmidt of Clovis Community College analyzed the survey results of the Beeson Church Health Questionnaire and the Connected in Christ instrument. Dr. Schmidt returned the results to me within one month of receipt. Dr. Schmidt used ANOVA, t-test, and F-test analyses. I analyzed the open-ended questionnaire and the Field Observation notebook.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Churches tend to measure their success by incomplete measurements, namely, attendance and offering. Though attendance and offering are important, factors that are more important exist in the overall health of a church. The Beeson Church Health Survey measures eight health traits in a church. Further, as shown in Chapter 2, the underlying theological beliefs of a participant in a church affect the health of a church. Specifically, how trinitarian persons within a church are in their spiritual practice and belief, affects the long-term health of a local church. The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of the Connected in Christ process in effecting change both of the church health of Kingswood United Methodist Church and the theological understanding of the attendees of Kingswood United Methodist Church.

Three questions guided this study. What are the changes in theological beliefs of the participants before participating and after participating in the Connected in Christ process as measured by the Connected in Christ instrument? What is the change in the church health of Kingswood United Methodist Church by participating in the Connected in Christ process as measured by the Beeson Church Health Questionnaire? What was the quality of the experience for the lay Connected in Christ team?

Profile of the Participants

The participants were the regular attendees of Kingswood United Methodist Church. All persons, sixteen years old, or over who attended Kingswood United Methodist Church six or more times in the six months before the first measurement, were mailed the survey each of the three times. I mailed 238 surveys on 4 February 2004, 19

August 2004, while I mailed 234 surveys on 3 November 2004. I received one hundred and nineteen responses from the first survey, ninety-eight from the second, and ninety-eight from the third.

Of those who returned the surveys, 68.37 percent were female in the first survey and 72.45 percent in the third. Married persons comprised 84.87 percent in the first survey while it dropped to 76.53 percent in the third. Church members made up 91.6 percent of the respondents in the first survey while 94.9 percent were church members in the second. Persons who attended three or more times a month comprised 88.24 percent in the first survey while that number increased to 94.74 percent in the third survey. The church office received 50 percent of the surveys back the first time and 41.88 percent the second and third.

In answer to the first research question, I found three areas of statistically significant change. The three areas all changed between survey one and two. This time frame was when preaching, especially theological preaching, was the major concentration of Connected in Christ. The three areas contained the respondents' understanding of the Godhead, their practice of the Christian life, and their understanding and use of the Bible.

In Table 4.1, the participants expressed a change in their trinitarian experience of worship. The abbreviations are M as means; SD as standard deviation while t and p express the variance of the survey groups and the statistical power of the analysis. These abbreviations continue in the remaining tables of this chapter.

Table 4.1. Christian Life as a Group (N= 119, 98, 98)

Connected in Christ Question	2-2004		8-2004		11-2004		t	p
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
Christian life as a group	2.13	1.11	1.78	.71	1.66	.55	1.97	.001
Q. 26 “When I worship, I find myself in awe of God.”	1.92	1.22	1.62	.90	1.62	.74	1.97	.03
Q. 27 “When I worship, I make a decision to follow Jesus.”	1.96	1.17	1.57	.71	1.65	.71	1.97	.001
Q. 28 “When I worship, I experience the presence of the Holy Spirit.”	1.92	1.13	1.61	.94	1.62	.78	1.97	.029
2-tailed test								

I found a statistically significant difference between surveys one and three.

Christian Life as a group showed a statistically significant improvement. In Questions 26, 27, and 28, I found a reason for the changes as related to Christian life. The worshipers of Kingswood United Methodist Church worshiped God in a more trinitarian manner.

Table 4.2 illustrates the finding that belief in the classical way of outlining the Trinity is stronger after the first year of Connected in Christ. This group of questions explored the belief about God: his presence and activity in the world and the makeup of the Trinity.

Table 4.2. Godhead as a Group (N=119, 98, 98)

Connected in Christ Question	2-2004		8-2004		11-2004		t	p
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
Godhead as a group	2.07	1.01	1.79	.59	1.68	.49	1.97	.000
Q. 3 "God is absent in our world."	3.99	1.52	4.17	1.33	4.39	1.12	1.97	.023
Q. 4 "God is close to a chosen Few of his people."	4.17	1.47	4.33	1.28	4.59	.92	1.97	.020
Q. 17 "Jesus Christ lived a sinless life."	2.10	1.59	1.68	1.26	1.67	1.17	1.97	.039
Q. 32 "I believe that God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit three persons in one Godhead."	1.71	1.34	1.22	.53	1.24	.49	1.97	.001
2-tailed test								

The attendees of Kingswood United Methodist Church were less deistic than before the process of Connected in Christ. The attendees became more trinitarian through the Connected in Christ process.

Table 4.3 shows another statistically significant finding in the belief in and usage of Scripture. These questions sought to ascertain the respondents' use of and belief in Scripture. The survey showed a difference in the use of Scripture.

Table 4.3. Bible As a Group (N=119, 98, 98)

Connected in Christ Question	2-2004		8-2004		11-2004		t	p
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
Bible as a group	2.46	.96	2.18	.77	2.18	.81	1.97	.035
Q. 19 "I never quote from the Bible."	3.52	1.41	3.98	1.17	3.91	1.20	1.97	.010
2-tailed test								

In answer to the second research question, I found no significant change in any

category from survey one to two, the surveys showed a statistically significant change between surveys one to three in authentic community and functional structures. The surveys showed a significant change between surveys two and three in passionate spirituality.

Passionate spirituality measured the respondent's level of passion about spirituality in the church and in the individual's spiritual life. Passionate spirituality also measures the level of the involvement of the Trinity in the life of the church.

Table 4.4. Passionate Spirituality as a Group (N=119, 98, 98)

Beeson Church Health Question	2-2004		8-2004		11-2004		t	p
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
Passionate spirituality as a group	2.39	.61	2.44	.52	2.28	.39	1.97	.095
Q. 43 "There is a sense of expectation surrounding our church."	2.40	.90	2.18	.75	2.15	.71	1.97	.057
Q. 57 "Our church emphasizes the person and power of the Holy Spirit."	1.88	1.03	1.79	.77	1.59	.57	1.97	.462
Q. 64 "This church operates through the power and presence of God."	1.92	1.00	1.69	.79	1.62	.75	1.97	.019
Q. 71 "I currently enjoy a greater intimacy with God than at any other time of my life."	2.18	1.20	2.10	1.02	1.84	.84	1.97	.018
2-tailed test								

Passionate spirituality is the only area that showed statistically significant change because of the 40 Days of Purpose program. Kingswood United Methodist Church did the 40 Days of Purpose program in its full version. The sermons followed the 40 Days of Purpose material, the small group material and many of the Sunday school classes either

The Connected in Christ team saw the role of continual planning as changed and changing. This finding fits into the functional structures of the Beeson Church Health survey but the Beeson survey failed to find a difference in the church as a whole.

In answer to the third research question, the following four excerpts of e-mail response from the Connected in Christ team summarize the team's feelings.

One member of the seven-member team said, "Very good: The regional trainings have given me insight into various issues, the Birkman Analysis was especially helpful; the team meetings have allowed me to grow closer to fellow church members."

Another said, "I would rate this experience as very good. I believe the training has been eye opening for us, as individuals and as a church family. The team has grown as a body, with concern and caring expanding for each of us. As an individual, I have learned more about myself and why I relate to God the way I do. I think knowing the responsibility that rests upon us for the future of Kingswood is an experience that is heavy, humbling and honor to have."

Another said, "I would rate it very good and the reason for that is because we were able to come together in a very positive way and we have affected [sic] change in the church. These meetings and trainings have accomplished positive things, and I love to serve when there are results for God."

Finally, another said, "Yes, the first year was effective. It created a perception of the need for planning and communicating plans to the congregation. Implementing the plans sparked the enthusiasm of the congregation. The training was OK, but I missed so many of the sessions, it is hard to discuss their impact. The things we did best was plan for special studies."

My field observation notes record moments of great excitement and some moments of great angst among the team. On 29 August 2004, the team spent most of the meeting bemoaning the reports of people being too busy for the 40 Days of Purpose. We gathered as a team at the altar of the church and cried out to God. Tears literally flowed. It was beginning to look as if we had failed to follow God or that people were failing to respond to the Holy Spirit. After that prayer time, commitments to participate flowed in and one hundred and eighty people were involved in eighteen groups.

Another point of angst with the team was the filling out of the survey forms. They really found survey taking a disagreeable task. Other than these two items, the team found the process worth their time, effort, and prayers.

Finally, Kingswood United Methodist Church of Clovis, New Mexico is not the only church studied with the Beeson Church Health Survey. The team of James Kinder, Brian Law, Keith Taylor, and Scott McKee developed the Beeson Church Health Questionnaire. They used the questionnaire to test the relationship of church health to church growth among General Baptist, United Methodist, Evangelical Presbyterian, and Christian and Missionary Alliance denominations. In every area but one, authentic community, the Beeson team found healthier churches that were growing than Kingswood. The abbreviations in the following table are as follows: EPC is Evangelical Presbyterian Church, WDCMA is Western Canada District of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, WOCUMC is West Ohio Conference of the United Methodist Church, GAGBC is General Association of General Baptist Churches, KUMC is Kingswood United Methodist Church, M is means, and SD is standard deviation.

Table 4.7 Church Health Characteristics Comparison between EPC, WDCMA, WOCUMC, GAGBC, and Kingswood

	EPC (N=15)		WDCMA (N=28)		WOCUMC (N=45)		GAGBC (N=9)		KUMC (N=97)	
Beeson Health Characteristic	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Engaging worship	1.88	.66	1.94	.67	1.86	.58	1.86	.58	2.15	.49
Passionate spirituality	1.95	.60	2.07	.58	2.01	.54	1.96	.53	2.28	.39
Intentional evangelism	2.00	.50	2.04	.49	2.11	.48	2.09	.45	2.74	.28
Mobilized laity	2.01	.58	2.14	.59	2.17	.56	2.26	.51	2.91	.31
Functional structures	2.08	.68	2.01	.55	2.17	.56	2.29	.59	2.25	.46
Empowering leadership	2.18	.63	2.19	.54	2.29	.54	2.44	.57	2.82	.38
Transforming discipleship	2.21	.49	2.33	.47	2.36	.50	2.33	.46	2.72	.29
Authentic community	2.29	.48	2.39	.40	2.34	.40	2.34	.42	2.01	.54

Source: McKee 76.

At present, the relationship of theological growth to increased church health is unknown. Kingswood is in the middle of a two-year process. Additionally, head change happens much quicker than heart change. Further, theological practice can and many times does change before theological belief

changes. As I continue with my study of Kingswood, I believe I will see increased church health as we have seen an improvement in theological understanding. Time will tell.

Summary

1. The first year of the Connected in Christ process improved church health and the theological understanding of Kingswood United Methodist Church.
2. Theological understanding improved during the first part of the process. This section saw preaching on theological themes.
3. Theological understandings of Godhead, Christian life and the Bible improved.
4. The practice of theology improved as well as the understanding of theology.
5. Church health improved throughout the whole year.
6. Passionate spirituality was the only category to improve only because of the 40 Days of Purpose program.
7. Functional structures and authentic community improved over the year.
8. The Connected in Christ team believed that the process was worthwhile and made a difference in the life of Kingswood United Methodist Church.
9. Kingswood United Methodist Church is not as healthy as other growing churches measured by the Beeson Church Health Questionnaire.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The project arose from a desire to improve church health and the theological understanding of churches, especially Kingswood United Methodist of Clovis, New Mexico. The team of Law, Kinder, McKee, and Taylor developed The Beeson Church Health Questionnaire as a means of measuring church health. I developed the Connected in Christ survey tool as a means of measuring the theological understanding and practice of individuals in churches. The Arkansas annual conferences developed the Connected in Christ process as a means of improving the health of individual churches and annual conferences in United Methodism in particular and churches in general. I measured the change of Kingswood United Methodist of Clovis, New Mexico, as Kingswood traveled through the first year of the two-year Connected in Christ process.

In Chapter 2, I related the health of a congregation to the theological concept of the Trinity. The Trinity is a model of community and community in mission. On Earth, the community in mission is the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God expresses itself through the local church and the universal Church. As the local church and the universal Church align themselves with the work of the Kingdom of God, they become healthier. This project sought to evaluate the ability of the Connected in Christ process to align Kingswood United Methodist Church of Clovis, New Mexico, to the Trinity in understanding and practice.

OVERALL HEALTH OF KINGSWOOD

The overall church health of Kingswood of Clovis, New Mexico appears to be moderately high. Authentic community is the strongest church health characteristic while

mobilized laity is the weakest. The results of the Beeson Church Health Questionnaire break down easily into two groups. Authentic community, engaging worship, passionate spirituality, and functional structures are much stronger at Kingswood. Transforming discipleship, intentional evangelism, empowering leadership, and mobilized laity are less healthy at Kingswood. The internal elements are much stronger after the first year. At Kingswood, such a result is not surprising because of the strong emphasis on developing the spiritual life of the church and the members. The Connected in Christ team's plan was to strengthen the church's relationship to God and then to write an outward-focused mission statement. The team believed that healthy spirits would lead to healthy ministry. The process needs more time. The continued study of Kingswood will reveal if this assumption is correct.

Engaging worship, passionate spirituality, and authentic community highlight a desire to connect with God and to do so in a corporate way as well as individuals. Kingswood continues to grow its small group ministry and this emphasis clearly reflects in these findings. Further, the program staff of Kingswood is seeking to provide a trinitarian Worship experience, as shown in the area of engaging worship. The changes implemented in this area occurred before the Connected in Christ process started, and thus the questionnaire found no significant change. The struggle to become more trinitarian and less pantheistic, as noted in Chapter 2, is being won. Kingswood is higher in its ability to lead people, by spiritual direction, worship, and ministry toward a more trinitarian faith.

The Connected in Christ team could look next at furthering the ability of Kingswood in the areas of mobilize laity, intentional evangelism, transforming

discipleship and empowering leadership. This cluster of four relatively unhealthy traits keeps Kingswood from becoming the evangelism powerhouse that she could be. Kingswood fails to empower, transform, and mobilize and, this failure prevents Kingswood from evangelization.

In the Connected in Christ survey, several areas of theological belief and practice showed improvement through the Connected in Christ process. Six months of preaching over theological themes had a profound and noticeable effect. The strongest scores of all the surveys were in the areas of Christian life and Godhead. A significant change occurred in these two areas through the first half of the first year of the Connected in Christ process. Thus, theological change (in both practice and belief) can occur before church health improves as measured by the Beeson Church Health Questionnaire.

Positive change can occur before a church finalizes the mission and vision statement. The Connected in Christ team finalized the work of a mission and vision statement at the end of the first year. Nevertheless, in this case, I had a vision for the church and the resulting mission and vision statement is a reflection of my original vision and a result of my progress toward that vision. The church agreed that I had a vision and would trust me to take Kingswood to that bright new land of church health.

The second half of the first year of the Connected in Christ process highlighted the 40 Days of Purpose program. That program did not affect the theology of the church as a whole. Indeed, the program only affected the area of passionate spirituality in a statistically significant way. Many pastors tout the 40 Days of Purpose program as a cure-all of church health ills. Clearly, 40 Days was not such a cure for Kingswood. The 40 Days of Purpose is an all-encompassing (if done according to directions) program. I

based the sermons on the program (though I did not strictly follow Rick Warren's outlines). We used the small group material but not the videos in most groups. For the forty days, we focused on God's purposes for our lives. I believe the improvement Kingswood saw in passionate spirituality occurred because of a link to authentic community. Authentic community was a statistically significant change from survey one to three, not just two to three. However, the 40 Days of Purpose program placed our small groups in the spot light. I believe the change in passionate spirituality occurred because of the increased emphasis on small groups during the 40 Days. In fact, the change in passionate spirituality and authentic community occurred because of the Connected in Christ team's plan to increase the level of spiritual life of Kingswood United Methodist Church. All of the changes made at Kingswood United Methodist Church were beginning to net results and indeed to enhance other changes. These changes include those made by the Connected in Christ team and those made before the Connected in Christ process.

These findings imply many things for revising the existing body of knowledge. First, church health and theological understanding can improve. A concerted effort can make a big difference even in only a year. Clergy and laity working together make a difference.

Second, I hear many pastors describe trusting in a prepared program to do the hard work of church health improvement for them; however, concerted preaching towards a goal, in this case better theological understanding, can have a profound effect upon the hearers. If they organize groups to discuss their sermons during the following week, they could see significant changes in the churches

they pastor. Many pastors are selling themselves and their preaching short. They may not need a prepared program to fix their churches.

A purchased program, such as 40 Days of Purpose, may work best as a part of an overall strategy of improving church health. Kingswood used the 40 Days of Purpose program as part of a whole scheme. Canned programs have a place, but such programs have both limits and possibilities. Such programs are not a totality in and of themselves.

Limitations of the Study

Kingswood found itself making progress in church health before the study began. Other factors, already in place and occurring simultaneously, could have influenced the findings. For one reason, Kingswood knew they would be part of the Connected in Christ process a full year before the process started. Some of the changes made in that intervening year happened because of the inspiration of being part of the Connected in Christ process. For example, Josh McCallister became the small group minister three months before the Connected in Christ process started. Josh became part of the staff of Kingswood knowing that Connected in Christ would emphasize small groups, but his employment did not come because of the work of the Connected in Christ team.

One limit of the study was the growth in trinitarian worship that occurred before the Connected in Christ started. In April of 2002, Brian Uerling became the music director of Kingswood United Methodist Church. He brought a well-defined sense of worship to the job—not just musical performance. When I arrived in June of 2002, I found Brian to be open to the idea of trinitarian worship. In fact, he put many of those factors into place upon his arrival. The change in the Doxology, which he initiated,

complemented the changes toward more trinitarian language that I initiated in other parts of the Sunday morning service.

Another limit of the study is that Kingswood was already growing in Sunday school. In 2002, the growth was 5 percent. In 2003, the growth in Sunday school attendance was 7 percent. In the year of the study, 2004, the growth in Sunday school attendance was 13 percent. Worship attendance, however, did not increase until the year of the study when a 13 percent increase occurred. Membership has not increased yet. While Kingswood shows an increase in the number of new members, an audit of membership roles has removed even more members, but Kingswood should see a membership increase in the very near future (see Appendix D).

Another limit of the study is that Connected in Christ needs four to five years before the full effect of the process shows itself. Kingswood is just getting started in Connected in Christ. Yes, the results are encouraging, but they are preliminary. I will be continuing this study for at least the next year. As encouraging as the results of this dissertation process are, the results that matter will come later. Those results should include a growing outreach to Clovis and the world and a concern for and action toward a more just world.

Another limit to the study is that much of the Connected in Christ process depends upon strength of pastoral leadership. Each Connected in Christ process places each church in a group of three other churches. Each group of four churches is a Connected in Christ quad. In Kingswood's quad, the necessity of strong pastoral leadership became apparent. The results of these four churches relate directly to the

leadership of the pastor. If a pastor of a church does not promote the Connected in Christ process with vigor and enthusiasm, the process will die stillborn.

Another limit to the study is that the responders were primarily frequent church attendees. I wonder what the results would be if we had a 100 percent return of the surveys.

Another limit to the study was my preparedness for a process such as Connected in Christ. I had received training in the area of Christian leadership and recognized the sixteen-point grid as a church health scheme (found in Table 2.5 p. 45). Connected in Christ is a process by which I could put into practice my learning. The process enrolled my participation and enthusiasm much quicker than my quad friends and even the district superintendents.

Another limit to the study was the spiritual hunger of Kingswood. They were ready for such a process. Many churches are not ready for a process of church health improvement. Many churches need a time of preparation before a process such as Connected in Christ can produce fruit.

Thus, in many ways, Kingswood United Methodist Church was a place prepared by God for me, and God prepared me for the church. A God moment occurred and Connected in Christ became the vehicle for that God moment. I pray that all churches and pastors find such a God moment.

An important note is that the process of Connected in Christ in New Mexico teaches that a team prepares the mission and vision statements before the team dreams about new programs. The team at Kingswood felt that the church needed a spiritual formation boost before Kingswood could implement a program of profound change in the

congregation. In addition, Connected in Christ as practiced in New Mexico teaches that the team produces buy-in of the vision by asking for input from the congregation early in the mission and vision process. Kingwood's Connected in Christ team developed vision differently. They asked God for the vision and then asked the congregation to fill-in details and make mid-course corrections. The team sought the input of the whole church only after the main details of the vision and mission were established. The team followed my leading. I had a vision; the team filled in details. There exists a debate about church leadership style in academia about who gets the vision: the whole church or a select group of leaders or leader within the church. I only mention this debate because Kingswood followed a different track than the Connected in Christ process teaches. I believe, as noted above, that the best answer lies somewhere in the middle of this debate.

Connected in Christ is very adaptable. No two churches will participate in the process in quite the same in the New Mexico annual conference. This fact means that the conclusions drawn from this study do not necessarily reflect what would happen in other churches. Further, the Connected in Christ team of Kingswood has deviated from the process as taught in New Mexico.

Unexpected Conclusions

Preaching, especially my preaching, on theological issues had results. I wanted my preaching to produce results, however, in the past; my preaching has met with mixed results. Frequently, in previous churches, my preaching received ridicule. I was gratified to learn that preaching, especially my preaching, made a difference in trinitarian understanding and practice. The first stage consisted only of preaching with some

teaching of the Church Council and the Connected in Christ team, yet, a significant change occurred in the church through that period.

As noted above, the theological practice of worship changed at Kingswood United Methodist Church before the start of the Connected in Christ process and the surveys. Nevertheless, the surveys detected the change in the second survey. There are two reasons for this change. First, theological teaching occurred during the first six-month period through the preaching of theological themes. People became able to articulate the change that they experienced. Second, a lag time exists between the experience of something new and new thinking. This lag time means that pastoral leaders should exercise patience as they deal with churches. In addition, one of the major assumptions of this study is that a change in theological thinking precedes a change in theological practice. Clearly, such a change is not as clear-cut as I first thought. Both theological teaching and theological practice should be at the forefront of efforts to change a church. One type of change without the other leads to malformation, not transformation.

Many people viewed the 40 Days of Purpose program as changing churches from unhealthy to healthy overnight. However, this study showed that only in one area did that program show a significant difference. Some preachers need to rethink their opinion of the 40 Days of Purpose program or include 40 Days in a more holistic church revitalization program.

My Personal Theological Journey

While working on the Doctor of Ministry degree, I developed my own scheme of church health including the following components: the church as the kingdom of God,

prayer base, trinitarian worship, complete discipleship, and outreach to the local community and beyond, every member in ministry, Spirit-led visionary, team-based leadership, and small groups. My thinking deepened in that my experience verified and reinforced my understanding about the life of prayer, complete discipleship, lay ministry and outreach, how God gives vision, small groups, and trinitarian church life. My thinking changed as Kingswood went through Connected in Christ in that I became convinced that a longer church health scheme is more precise than a shorter one.

As stated above, the Church is the visible expression of the kingdom of God in this world. Indeed, as Bishop Alfred Norris states, “The local church is the kingdom of God in miniature.” Though imperfect because the kingdom of God is here and yet is not here, the church is God’s chosen expression of the kingdom of God. The Trinity invites Christians to join in their communion as they live under the reign of God the Father. The already and not-yet aspects of the kingdom of God mean that the Church is frequently confused and confusing. God works in and through the confusion as Christians strive to make the Church his. Without that striving, Christians have no chance to live in communion with the Trinity. God honors believers with his presence as they seek to give him his proper place as King.

Christians pray to their heavenly Father because of the sacrifice of the Son of God and in the power of the Holy Spirit. A trinitarian understanding of prayer provides the basis for prayer. The faithful ask God to commune with them. Christians do so based upon the sacrifice of the Son of God at the cross. Believers go boldly to the throne of grace (Heb. 4:16). Christians do so under the prompting and the power of the Holy Spirit. Christians should ask God to tell them where he is at work in the world so that they can

enter into that work. God invites the Church to work with him in the world. Prayer is a means by which Christians work with God in the world. Nevertheless, Ben Patterson laments about prayer life:

Prayer is always getting nudged aside, neglected or perfunctorily performed as more pressing concerns take center stage. Many of us feel we just have too much to *do* [original emphasis] to have time to pray. At bottom, we don't believe we are really *doing* [original emphasis] anything when we pray—other than pray, that is. (93)

Preachers may teach people, Christians may know orthodoxy, but the Holy Spirit does not transform them from within to the same degree as when prayer is a primary element of church. Without transformation, church is just a numbers game. With metamorphism, church is a spiritual enterprise. If change of people is the goal of the Church, then prayer and worship must have a vital and consistent place (Denver and Stassen 472). Transformation of people becomes the goal of the local church because transformation is the goal of the Trinity. When people pray for the Church to be a means of change, they enter into the *perichoresis* dance of the Godhead by bathing all actions of the local church and universal church in prayer. The best example of this type of prayer is from Korea. G. Thompson Brown writes about many sociological and methodical reasons for the growth of the church in South Korea:

When asked the reason for the rapid church growth in their land, Korean church leaders usually mention the “Sae Byuk Kido” (the dawn prayer meeting). For years and years it has been the Korean tradition to have an early morning prayer service at the church every morning every day of the year! (85)

During Connected in Christ clergy sessions, the emphasis on prayer came through strongly. The clergy group prayed together and anointed each other with oil. This prayer life affected me greatly. Preachers rarely gather to pray. Nevertheless, God's power is

unleashed when clergy do pray together. In addition, the experience of the Connected in Christ team crying at the altar on 29 August 2004 affected me. I cried in front of laypeople during prayer. I could trust people, not just say I trusted them. I began to practice my theology. In addition, that time of prayer started the move of God in Kingswood United Methodist Church about the 40 Days of Purpose program.

The worship service is the most important place that leaders need to make certain that the church is trinitarian. The worship service is the most important act of a local church. Karl E. Shadley points out that the best place to teach theology is through worship (102-08). Worship's effects are slow but steady. Worship leaders can use the trinitarian formula correctly in many places in worship. Andrew Horseman writes about worship:

The doxology used to be "Glory to the Father, through the Son, in the Spirit." The doxology changed with the Arian controversy. Yet, the above formula is more Biblical. This provides a two-way dynamic (up and down). This is in the Anglican liturgy in places. (92-93)

Though pastors cannot and should not, change the Doxology, clergy may use the old formula in many other places.

The Sacrament of Baptism has been trinitarian since before the details of trinitarian doctrine were finalized (Oden 117). Because baptism is an outward sign of entering into the *perichoresis* of God, this rite can be extremely trinitarian. Of course, a child completes his or her baptism at confirmation. This completion should mark the child's acceptance of God's gift of redemption through the Father's love as expressed through the Son and worked into his or her life by the Spirit.

Pastors can also choose to be self-consciously trinitarian in their language during prayers, readings, benedictions, and sermons. The invocation offers pastors the

opportunity to be trinitarian: “Father, we have come to give you glory through the Son in the power of the Spirit.”

Christians follow the example of the Trinity and join the *perichoresis* dance of the Godhead. Christians commune with the three persons of the Trinity. Prayer is thus more than a wish list that people present to God. In prayer, Christians commune with the Almighty as a friend. As noted above, this communion of being a friend with God is completely lacking in many churches.

Christians follow the example of Christ and are present with his body, the Church. The Church chooses to follow the Son in obedience to him and become an active part of his body. As “iron sharpens iron” (Prov. 27:17, NIV), Christians place themselves in the body of believers so that they may become closer to God. Christians commune with the Trinity as they commune with their fellow believers.

God the Father has given to the faithful salvation, the Holy Spirit, and material blessings. In return, Christians give their material blessings to God as a sign of their spiritual service. If a believer does not return a portion, with gratitude, back to God, then their discipleship is not complete. Faithful Christians commune with the Trinity as they give back to God from their material blessings.

Christians use the gifts that the Holy Spirit bestows to them, in order to serve God in the fallen world. Believers work to serve human beings in the world. Christians commune with the Trinity as believers work in service to the world. Complete discipleship means being completely trinitarian.

During the first year, Connected in Christ did not put much of an emphasis on complete discipleship. The first year’s teaching did put an emphasis on knowing how to

relate to God based on Myers-Briggs scores. We also used the Birkman personality test as the Birkman personality profile related to Wesleyan spirituality. These personality-based spirituality methods deepened my thinking about the proper amount of emphasis on complete discipleship. I became more comfortable with how God made me to relate to him and how God made others to relate to him. I also understood more the problems certain laypeople have in the life of the Spirit. I realized I needed to consider an individual's personality when advising them how to relate to God.

God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit work to bring about the salvation of the world and the betterment of the lot of humanity. A local church, not just the clergy, joins in the Trinity's work if that church is in outreach to the local community and beyond.

In social programs, the Trinity leads the local church. The Church joins in the circle dance as the Trinity seeks to bring about the kingdom of God in this world's structures. Soup kitchens, legislative action committees, and clothing pantries begin a list of ways that churches can work with the Trinity as God seeks to transform this world.

In evangelistic outreach, the Church joins in the Trinity's work as the Holy Spirit is convicting the world (John 16:8) and wooing the world to God (John 6:44). The church seeks to find the way that God is working to bring the lost to him and join in that work. The Trinity invites people to join in the work of the redemption of the world. Thus, every member of a local church should be in ministry. God the Father invites his children to work for the redemption of his created order. God the Son invites his Church to spread the news of his salvation of the spiritual world. God the Spirit invites the Church to use

his gifts as the Father and the Son directed in social concern ministries and evangelistic ministries.

In many of the above ministries, clergy are afraid to give the ministry to the laypeople; however, clergy must realize that the ministry is not theirs but God's. If ministry is only a human task, then the laity cannot participate. After all, the clergy have a hard enough time doing ministry. Clergy receive training; laypeople do not. The clergy contaminate the ministry with human elements. If trained people contaminate the ministry, untrained people will contaminate the ministry of God even more.

Nevertheless, "Christian ministry is not my asking Christ to join me in my ministry as I offer him to others. It is my joining with him in his ongoing ministry as he offers himself to others through me" (Seamands). Pastors can trust laypeople with ministry because the ministry is not the laypeople's ministry; ministry is Christ's ministry through them. Yes, they may not do ministry just right; however, God uses the clergy when they do ministry incorrectly. No one ministers perfectly. This imperfection is what ministering in the already but not-yet time of the kingdom of God is all about. The Connected in Christ portions that emphasized all persons pastored well and being in mission deepened my thinking. I became more deeply committed to lay involvement in ministry, especially in the working of the Connected in Christ team. A real team mentality developed. In addition, the team actually enjoyed being a part of such a ministry opportunity. Further, the team motivated and inspired the whole church to work in the process together. The team's efforts made the church more responsive and equipped.

Each local church must have a Spirit-led visionary in its midst. This visionary is usually the clergy leader. John Maxwell states that a visionary leader has the following

characteristics.

Visionary Leaders are self-confident. Clergy leaders are self-motivated. Visionaries are mission driven. Such leaders find motivation in a challenge. Such leaders simplify change. Clergy leaders maintain a sense of humor. Such leaders are open-minded and flexible. Visionaries realize that God is the author of change (Maxwell).

Though only one visionary leader exists in a local church, total leadership is team based. The work of the leadership team, both paid staff and volunteers, will bring the Trinity to the forefront of the congregation's thinking and combat pantheism. The most beneficial work of the leadership team is modeling the relationship of the Trinity. This modeling, which means that team members have allowed God to be king in their lives, brings the kingdom of God into the world in the most complete way possible in this life. In churches that emphasize a committee structure, a team spirit is necessary.

In this area, Connected in Christ challenged my thinking the most. Vision, for Connected in Christ in New Mexico, is something that occurs through surveys and house meetings in the congregation. Connected in Christ chooses this approach in order to increase a church's ownership of a new vision statement. I came to understand that a blend is perhaps the best approach. If a church produces a vision through the Connected in Christ method, the lowest common denominator visioning is the result; however, a team should keep the church informed in the visioning process and the church's input is vital to a complete vision. The Holy Spirit works through all of God's people.

In addition, the modeling that the Connected in Christ team did of a trinitarian understanding of team provided a much-needed calming effect in the church as a whole.

In the year before my arrival, Kingswood found itself in a massive church fight. The

Connected in Christ team was compromised of individuals from both sides of the fight. The members of the team learned to work together again, love one another again, and serve God together again. They truly became an example of community and that example inspired community in the congregation. By the power of the team's effectiveness, I learned deeper the value of the trinitarian concept of community.

Small groups fill two distinct needs in the lives of believers. First, everyone needs to belong (Wuthnow 52). This need is what makes the Celtic way of evangelism so powerful. Human beings need connection to others. If people become connected, then their transformation takes place simply because a basic human need finds satisfaction. Second, people need to grow spiritually. Spiritual growth occurs best in a caring, loving atmosphere. By definition, a small group is a caring, loving atmosphere. In an act of genius, John Wesley put people together to work on their spiritual lives. Wesley did so with a series of interlocking groups (Henderson 83-126). As the group forms community with each other, they prayerfully enter the circle dance of the Trinity. Nevertheless, the Connected in Christ emphasis on authentic community is much bigger than small groups. Because of that emphasis, I have begun to see that authentic community is much bigger than small groups. Authentic community should include ministry teams, the worship service, Sunday school classes and leadership teams or committees.

I noted that the Trinity is the keystone of this model of church health. The Trinity revolves around everything, and everything revolves around the Trinity. Connected in Christ in New Mexico was not as explicitly trinitarian as I was. However, Connected in Christ is an evolving process, and I believe the process will be more explicitly trinitarian in the future. Nevertheless, the Connected in Christ process did push me to become more

trinitarian in my thinking and especially in my actions. I became more involved in community. I became more explicitly trinitarian in my approach to the ministry of Kingswood United Methodist Church and Kingswood became more explicitly trinitarian in her approach to ministry.

Finally, I changed my thinking about church health schemes. Before, I tried to keep my scheme to eight topics or smaller. Connected in Christ has sixteen. In working with that scheme for two years, I realize the importance of more precise definitions of church health. Connected in Christ is more theological, more spiritual, and more geared to a specific church situation than most church health schemes. I now believe that more precise is better. If a church health scheme is precise while being short, so be it. If not, one should make the scheme longer.

Practical Applications

Preaching, with group study of the sermons going on at the same time, is a possibility for a future study. Unknown to me, my sermons became a topic of discussion in the youth group, adult small groups and Sunday school classes. No doubt, this group discussion influenced the effectiveness of the preaching. A future study could find out how much.

Other possible studies are short-term but intense programs in their affect upon church health. For example, “Alpha,” “Disciple,” “Come Thirsty,” could affect churches with significant results.

Finally, a practical application is that pastors should not just give up. God may call pastors to other fields; however, they may just quit right before the good work begins. I almost did; thankfully, God closed the doors. The only church where I have seen

significant change is Kingswood United Methodist Church of Clovis, New Mexico. My prayer is that God would use this dissertation and the Connected in Christ process to encourage struggling pastors so that the Trinity's kingdom can advance through the local church.

APPENDIX A

Beeson Church Health Questionnaire

WHAT IS YOUR CHURCH'S HEALTH QUOTIENT?

Instructions: This survey is designed to assess the general health of local congregations. The entire survey generally takes 10-15 minutes to complete. Your name and answers will remain anonymous. For best results, complete the survey quickly without pausing to consider any one item in depth. Thank you for participating.

1. Name of your church? _____
2. Name of the town in which your church is located? _____
3. Your age _____
4. Gender
 - 4.1 _____ Male
 - 4.2 _____ Female
5. Marital status
 - 5.1 _____ Single
 - 5.2 _____ Married
 - 5.3 _____ Widowed
 - 5.4 _____ Other:
6. Number of children _____
7. The following are a regular part of my spiritual life (check all that apply):
 - 7.1 _____ Bible Study
 - 7.2 _____ Devotional times
 - 7.3 _____ Family devotional time
 - 7.4 _____ Involvement in ministry (Christian service)
 - 7.5 _____ Prayer
 - 7.6 _____ Sharing my faith with others
 - 7.7 _____ Other spiritual disciplines (fasting, etc.):
8. Are you a member of this church?
 - 8.1 _____ Yes
 - 8.2 _____ No

9. Which best describes your current involvement with the local church you attend most?
(check one)

- 9.1 _____ Attendee only
- 9.2 _____ Leadership board member
- 9.3 _____ Ministry leader/teacher
- 9.4 _____ Pastoral Staff

10. Approximately how many years have you been involved with this particular church?

11. Which of the following best describes how often you attend weekend worship services? (check one)

- 11.1 _____ Visitor
- 11.2 _____ Less than once a month
- 11.3 _____ 1-2 times a month
- 11.4 _____ 3 + times a month

12. In the past year, approximately what percentage of your total income from all sources did you give to your local church?
_____ %

13. The current staff, for the ministries of your church, is . . . ? (check one)

- 13.1 _____ Understaffed
- 13.2 _____ Adequate
- 13.3 _____ Overstaffed

14. I actively participate in a small group or ministry team.

- 14.1 _____ Yes
- 14.2 _____ No

15. How would you describe the community within which your church is located?
(check one)

- 15.1 _____ Growing and thriving
- 15.2 _____ Plateaued
- 15.3 _____ Declining

16. I would describe my personal spiritual life as : (check one only)

- 16.1 _____ Growing
- 16.2 _____ Plateaued
- 16.3 _____ Declining

Instructions: Using the scale provided below, fill in the number beside each statement which corresponds most nearly to your assessment of that aspect of your church.

1=Strongly Agree 2=Agree 3=Somewhat Agree 4=Disagree 5=Strongly Disagree

17. The size of our facility is adequate for our current ministries.
18. I enjoy getting together with other people from my church outside of church events.
19. The leaders of our church seem rather defensive.
20. I find the sermons convicting, challenging and encouraging to my walk with God.
21. My local church has a very clear purpose and well-defined values.
22. My local church actively reaches out to its neighborhood through spiritual and community service.
23. My church affirms me in my ministry tasks.
24. I regularly practice the spiritual disciplines (prayer, Bible study, fasting, and meditation).
25. I have a close enough relationship with several people in my church that I can discuss my deepest concerns with them.
26. Our church is lead by individual(s) who articulate vision and achieve results. The leaders of our church articulate vision and achieve results.
27. I find the worship services spiritually inspiring.
28. Our church clearly communicates our mission statement.
29. Prayer is a highlight of the worship service.
30. Tithing is a priority in my life.
31. I believe that interpersonal conflict is healthy when dealt with appropriately and in a biblical manner.
32. New ministry ideas are normally appreciated and encouraged.
33. The music in the church services help me worship God.
34. I do not know my church's plans and direction for the years ahead.

35. I am actively involved in a ministry of this church.
36. Our church relies upon the power and presence of God to accomplish ministry.
37. My prayer life reflects a deep dependence on God concerning the practical aspects of life.
38. I have experienced a lot of joy and laughter in my church.
39. There are few training opportunities in our church.
40. The worship at this church is so inspiring that I like to invite my friends.
41. This church teaches that Jesus Christ is the only way to heaven.
42. I do not know my spiritual gift(s).
43. There is a sense of expectation surrounding our church.
44. this church has a clear process that develops people's spiritual gift(s).

45. I experience deep, honest relationships with a few other people in my church.
46. The lay people of our church receive frequent training.
47. Excellence is an important value in how we accomplish ministry.
48. This church shows the love of Christ in practical ways.
49. I enjoy the tasks I do in church.
50. There is an atmosphere of generosity within our church.
51. I would describe my personal spiritual life as growing.
52. The love and acceptance I have experienced inspires me to invited others to my church.
53. I look forward to attending worship services at this church.
54. I have confidence in the management and spending of our church's financial resources.
55. In our church the importance of sharing Christ is often discussed.
56. I feel that my role in the church is very important.
57. Our church emphasizes the person and presence of the Holy Spirit.
58. My church needs to place more emphasis on the power of prayer.
59. The leaders and members of our church enjoy and trust one another.
60. When I leave a worship service, I feel like I have "connected" with

other worshipers.

61. My church is open to changes that would increase our ability to reach and disciple people.
62. Our church has very few programs, which appeal to non-Christians.
63. I share my faith with non-believing family and friends.
64. This church operates through the power and presence of God.
65. I rarely consult God's word to find answers to life's issues.
66. The leaders of our church seem to be available when needed.
67. When I leave a worship service I feel I have had a meaningful experience with God.
68. We have an effective and efficient decision making process in our church.
69. People rarely come to know Jesus Christ as their savior in our church.
70. The teaching ministry of this church encourages me to be involved in ministry.
71. I currently enjoy a greater intimacy with God than at any other time in my life.

Listing of Health Questions according to Characteristic

1=Strongly disagree 2=Moderately disagree 3=Neither agree nor disagree
4=Moderately agree 5=Strongly agree

Authentic Community:

18. I enjoy getting together with other people from my church outside of church events.

- 25. I have a close enough relationship with several people in my church that I can discuss my deepest concerns with them.
- 31. I believe that interpersonal conflict or misconduct is dealt with appropriately and in a biblical manner.
- 38. I have experience a lot of joy and laughter in our church.
- 45. I experience deep, honest relationships with a few other people in my church.
- 52. The love and acceptance I have experienced inspires me to invite others to my church.

Empowering Leadership:

- 59. The leaders and members of our church enjoy and trust one another.
- 66. The leaders of our church seem to be available when needed.
- 19. The leaders of our church seem rather defensive.
- 26. Our church is led by individuals(s) who articulate vision and achieve results.
- 32. New ministry ideas are normally appreciated and encouraged.
- 39. There are few training opportunities in our church.
- 46. The lay people of our church receive frequent training.

Engaging Worship:

- 53. I look forward to attending worship services at this church.
- 60. When I leave a worship service, I feel like I have “connected” with other worshippers.
- 67. When I leave a worship service, I feel I have had a meaningful experience with God.
- 20. I find the sermons convicting, challenging, and encouraging to my walk with God.
- 27. I find the worship services spiritually inspiring.
- 33. The music in the church services helps me worship God.
- 40. The worship at this church is so inspiring that I would like to invite my friends.

Functional Structures:

- 47. Excellence is an important value in how we accomplish ministry.
- 54. I have confidence in the management and spending of our church’s financial resources.
- 61. My church is open to changes that would increase our ability to reach and disciple people.

- 68. We have an effective and efficient decision-making process in my church.
- 21. Our church has a very clear purpose and well-defined values.
- 28. Our church clearly communicates our mission statement.
- 34. I do not know my church's plans and direction for the years ahead.

Intentional Evangelism:

- 41. This church teaches that Jesus Christ is the only way to heaven.
 - 48. This church shows the love of Christ in practical ways.
 - 55. In our church the importance of sharing Christ is often discussed.
 - 62. Our church has very few programs, that appeal to non-Christians.
 - 69. People rarely come to know Jesus Christ as their savior in our church.
 - 22. My local church actively reaches out to its neighborhood through spiritual and community service.
 - 63. I share my faith with non-believing family and friends.
-

Mobilized Laity:

- 35. I am actively involved in a ministry of this church.
 - 42. I do not know my spiritual gift(s).
 - 49. I enjoy the tasks I do in the church.
 - 56. I feel that my role in the church is very important.
 - 23. My church affirms me in my ministry tasks.
 - 70. The teaching ministry of this church encourages me to be involved in ministry.
-

Passionate Spirituality:

- 29. Prayer is a highlight of the worship service.
 - 36. Our church relies upon the power and presence of God to accomplish ministry.
 - 43. There is a sense of expectation surrounding our church.
 - 50. There is an atmosphere of generosity within our church.
 - 57. Our church emphasizes the person and presence of the Holy Spirit.
 - 64. This church operates through the power and presence of God.
 - 71. I currently enjoy a greater intimacy with God than at any other time in my life.
-

Transforming Discipleship:

- 24. I regularly practice the spiritual disciplines (prayer, Bible study, fasting, and meditation).
 - 30. Tithing is a priority in my life.
 - 37. My prayer life reflects a deep dependence on God concerning the practical aspects of life.
 - 44. Our church has a clear process that develops people's spiritual gift(s).
 - 51. I would describe my personal spiritual life as growing.
 - 58. My church needs to place more emphasis on the power of prayer.
 - 65. I rarely consult God's word to find answers to life's issues.
-

17. The size of our facility is adequate for our current ministries – This question is a demographic question rather than a health characteristic question.

APPENDIX B

Open-Ended Survey for CIC Team

1. Do attendees of Kingswood UMC experience God's transforming and empowering presence? If so, give one recent (six month) example.
2. Does Kingswood UMC show a commitment to worship that connects people to God? If so, give one recent (six month) example.
3. Does Kingswood UMC use small groups to enhance faith? If so, give one recent (six month) example.
4. Does Kingswood UMC emphasize teaching about Christ and the Holy Spirit? If so, give one recent (six month) example.
5. Does Kingswood UMC emphasize spiritual disciplines including: prayer, Bible reading, worship attendance, fasting, acts of piety, acts of mercy, acts of justice? If so, give one recent (six month) example.
6. Does Kingswood UMC emphasize biblical and historical Christianity? If so, give one recent (six month) example.
7. Does Kingswood UMC emphasize the Wesleyan salvific process of justification and sanctification? If so, give one recent (six month) example.
8. Does Kingswood UMC help people fulfill their membership vows? If so, give one recent (six month) example.
9. Does Kingswood UMC emphasize continual planning? If so, give one recent (six month) example.
10. Does Kingswood UMC emphasize spiritual learning and spiritual growth for all ages? If so, give one recent (six month) example.
11. Does Kingswood UMC emphasize lay and clergy pastoring? If so, give one recent (six month) example.
12. Does Kingswood UMC emphasize servant leadership? If so, give one recent (six month) example.
13. Does Kingswood UMC emphasize an outward focus in missions and evangelism? If so, give one recent (six month) example.
14. Does Kingswood UMC emphasize accountability in its church life and ministry? If so, give one recent (six month) example.
15. Does Kingswood UMC emphasize stewardship of all of life? If so, give one recent (six month) example.
16. Does Kingswood UMC emphasize cooperation among churches? If so, give one recent (six month) example.

Connected In Christ Survey

Please circle each question with 1 being strongly agree and 5 being strongly disagree.

My goodness as a person will determine if I go to heaven. 1 2 3 4 5

Jesus Christ lived a sinless life.	1	2	3	4	5
The Bible is totally accurate in matters of faith and spiritual practice.	1	2	3	4	5
I never quote the Bible.	1	2	3	4	5
I quote the Bible once a week.	1	2	3	4	5
I quote the Bible several times a week.	1	2	3	4	5
Human beings are basically good.	1	2	3	4	5
Human beings have an evil bent.	1	2	3	4	5
Human beings are neither good nor evil.	1	2	3	4	5
Moral Absolutes exist.	1	2	3	4	5
When I worship, I find myself in awe of God.	1	2	3	4	5
When I worship, I make a decision to follow Christ more closely.	1	2	3	4	5
When I worship, I experience the presence of the Holy Spirit.	1	2	3	4	5
I pray because of the sacrifice of Jesus.	1	2	3	4	5
I seek to have the Holy Spirit pray through me.	1	2	3	4	5
I use prayer as means to remove sin from my life.	1	2	3	4	5
I believe that God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit, three persons in one Godhead.	1	2	3	4	5

Groupings

Christian Life:

- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 12.
- 13.
- 14.
- 26.
- 27.

- 28.
- 29.
- 30.
- 31.

God:

- 3.
- 4.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.
- 11.
- 17.
- 32.

Humans:

- 1.
- 2.
- 16.
- 22.
- 23.
- 24.

Bible:

- 15.
- 18.
- 19.
- 20.
- 21.
- 25.

APPENDIX D

Chart of Attendance and Membership of Kingswood UMC

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Membership	388	345	329	345	333	312
Worship attendance	168	178	175	184	180	203
Sunday school attendance	68	73	83	86	92	104

APPENDIX E

Sermon Schedule for 11 January to 20 June of 2004

Date	Theme	Scripture
11 January	Can you get anything in prayer?	Luke 11:5-13 1 John 5:14-15 2 Cor. 12:7-12 James 4:2-3
18 January	What matters most?	Mat. 6:19-34
25 January	Is the Hebrew God the Christian God?	Exo. 3:1-14 John 8:52-59
1 February	Separation of Church and State?	Mat. 5:13-15 Tit. 3:1-2
8 February	Predestination, Prophecy, and Free Will	Rom. 8:28-29
15 February	Families in Crisis	Eph. 5:21-33
22 February	Raising Children	Eph. 6:1-4
29 February	Wesley's Grace Upon Grace	John 1:14-16
7 March	Wesley's Means of Grace	Acts 6:1-4
14 March	<u>The Passion of the Christ: True or False?</u>	John 19:1-3
21 March	Jesus is the only way to God—True or False?	John 14:1-7
28 March	Jesus Died for You—True or False?	1 John 2:1-2
4 April	Jesus is the Son of God—True or False?	John 8:53-59
11 April	Jesus is Alive—True or False?	1 Cor. 15:1-8
18 April	When Confronting Sin	John 8:2-11
25 April	Prayer Conference with Mary Kay McCauley	
2 May	Vacation	
9 May	The Model for Motherhood	Prov. 31:10-31
16 May	Sick Day	
23 May	Youth/Senior Sunday	
30 May	Let My People Minister	1 Pet. 2:4-10
6 June	Empowered for Ministry	Acts 2:1-11
13 June	Roman vs. Celtic Style of Evangelism	John 4:1-26
20 June	Social Ministry: Find a Need and Fill It	Mark 2:1-12

WORKS CITED

- Barna, George. "Religious Beliefs Vary Widely by Denomination." E-mail newsletter. 25 June 2001.
- Bernard, David K. Growing a Church: Seven Apostolic Principles. Hazelwood, MO: Word Aflame, 2001.
- Birkman, Roger W. Birkman Personality Profile. Houston: Birkman, 1983.
- Bradley, Jennifer. "My So-Called Faith." The New Republic 212 (9-16 Jan. 1995): 16-17.
- Brown, G. Thompson. "Why Has Christianity Grown Faster in Korea Than in China?" Missiology: An International Review 20 (1994): 85.
- Busch, Richard A. "A Strange Silence." The Christian Century 112 (22-29 Mar. 1995): 316-17.
- Carson, D. A. The Gospel According to John. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991.
- Churchill, Allen D. "The New Testament and the Trinity." W. Stirling 31-108.
- Cladis, George. Leading the Team-Based Church: How Pastors and Church Staffs Can Grow Together into a Powerful Fellowship of Leaders. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999.
- Clemons, Lance. Personal interview. Apr. 2003.
- Dearborn, Karen L. "The Trinity." The IVP Women's Bible Commentary. Ed. Catherine Clark Kroeger and Mary J. Evans. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002. 541-47.
- Denver, John P, and Glen H. Stassen. "Transformational Faith: A Concrete Discipleship Ethic for Growing Churches." Review and Expositor 92 (1995): 472.

DeVellis, Robert F. Scale Development: Theory and Applications. Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1991.

Dongell, Joseph. John: A Bible Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition. Indianapolis, IN: Wesleyan, 1997.

Fernando, Ajith. "The Church: The Mirror of the Trinity." W. Taylor 239-56.

Henderson, D. Michael. John Wesley's Class Meeting: A Model for Making Disciples. Nappanee, IN: Evangel, 1997.

Holy Bible. New International Version. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985.

Holy Bible. New Revised Standard Version. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1989.

Horseman, Andrew. "The Shape of the Trinity: Eucharistic Worship and the Doctrine of the Trinity." Theology 102 (1999): 89-96.

Hunter, George G. The Celtic Way of Evangelism: How Christianity Can Reach the West ... Again. Nashville: Abingdon, 2000.

---. Lecture to DM 863. Schaumburg, IL. 17 Oct. 2000.

Keller, Timothy. "Preaching to the Secular Mind." The Journal of Biblical Counseling 14.1 (Fall 1995): 55-64.

Kinder, James. "Church Health and Church Growth among General Association of General Baptist Churches." Diss. Asbury Theological Seminary, 2002.

King, Max. Personal interview. May 2000.

Kotter, John P. "Leading Change: Why Transformation Efforts Fail." Harvard Business Review Mar-Apr 1995: 2-10.

Law, Brian A. "The Relationship between Church Health and Church Growth in United Methodist Churches in the West Ohio Annual Conference." Diss. Asbury Theological Seminary, 2002.

Leupp, Roderick T. Knowing the Name of God: A Trinitarian Tapestry of Grace, Faith and Community. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996.

Mann, Alice. Raising the Roof: The Pastoral to Program Size Transition. Washington, DC: Alban Institute, 2001.

Maxwell, John. Lecture to DM 861. Houston, TX. 17 Feb. 2000.

McKee, Scott. "The Relationship between Church Health and Church Growth in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church." Diss. Asbury Theological Seminary, 2003.

Morgan, Donald W. Share the Dream, Build the Team: Ten Keys for Revitalizing Your Church. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2001.

Morris, Leon. New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Gospel According to John. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971.

Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. Career and Personality Tests Online. 2001. 9 Apr. 2005.
<<http://www.discoveryyourpersonality.com/MBTI.hym1>>.

Norris, Alfred. Sermon preached to Northwest Texas Annual Conference. Amarillo, TX. 6 June 1998.

Oden, Thomas C. Pastoral Theology: Essentials of Ministry. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1983.

Olson, Mark A. Moving Beyond Church Growth: An Alternative Vision for Congregations. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002.

Ottati, Douglas F. "Being Trinitarian: The Shape of Saving Faith." The Christian Century 112 (8 Nov.1995): 1044-47.

The Passion of the Christ. Dir. Mel Gibson. Icon, 2003.

Patterson, Ben. "Fatal Omission: The One Thing We're Tempted to Leave Out of Ministry." Leadership 16 (Winter 1995): 93-95.

Percept Study for Clovis, New Mexico 13 May 2003.

Peterson, Eugene H. Under the Unpredictable Plant: An Exploration in Vocational Holiness. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992.

Ridderbos, Herman. The Gospel of John: A Theological Commentary. Trans. John Vriend. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997.

Roberts, Michael. Lecture given to Connected in Christ New Mexico Group 1, Session 1. Santa Fe, NM. 9 Feb. 2004.

Roxburgh, Alan. "Rethinking Trinitarian Missiology." W. Taylor 179-88.

Scott, Graham. "The Foundation of the Doctrine of the Trinity: The Early Church." W. Stirling 109-138.

Scott, James B., and Molly Davis Scott. Sustaining Pastoral Excellence: The United Methodist Church in Arkansas: Connected in Christ. A grant request to the Lilly Endowment. Little Rock: North Arkansas Annual Conference, 2002.

Seamands, Steve. "Theology of Lay Ministry." Lecture to DM 864.

Montgomery, AL. 22 Feb. 2001.

Shadley, Karl E. "Leading Trinitarian Incarnational Worship: The Essential Work of the Pastorate." Diss. Fuller Theological Seminary, 1996.

Sloyan, Gerald Stephen. John: Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching. Atlanta: John Knox, 1988.

Snyder, Howard A. Models of the Kingdom. Nashville: Abingdon, 1991.

Stiriling, Andrew, ed. The Trinity: An Essential for Faith in Our Time. Nappanee, IN: Evangel, 2002.

Taylor, Keith. "Church Health and Church Growth in the Western Canadian District of the Christian and Missionary Alliance in Canada." Diss.: Asbury Theological Seminary, 2003.

Taylor, William D., ed. Global Missiology for the 21 Century: The Iguassa Dialogue. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000.

"Theology." Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary. 1993 ed.

Timiadis, Emilianos. "The Trinitarian Structure of the Church and Its Authority." Theological Dialogue between Orthodox and Reformed Churches. Ed. Thomas F. Torrance. Edinburgh and London: Scottish Academic, 1985. 121-56.

Toon, Peter. Our Triune God: A Biblical Portrayal of the Trinity. Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1996.

Ury, M. William. "A Wesleyan Concept of 'Person'." Wesleyan Theological Journal 38.2 (Fall 2003): 30-56.

Volf, Miroslav. After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998.

Ware, Timothy. The Orthodox Church. Baltimore: Penguin, 1963.

Warren, Rick. 40 Days of Purpose. Lake Forest, CA: PurposeDriven, 2003.

Wiersma, William. Research Methods in Education. 6th ed. Boston: Allyn, 1995.

Wuthnow, Robert. Sharing the Journey: Small Groups and America's New Quest for Community. New York: Free, 1996.

WORKS CONSULTED

- Cabal, Theodore J. "Problems and Promises in a Biblical Worldview with Special Reference to John Paul Newport." Diss. Southwestern Theological Seminary, 1995.
- Curry, David. "The Doctrine of the Trinity and the Renewal of the Church." W. Stirling 241-79.
- Del Colle, Ralph. "Reflections on the Filioque." Journal of Ecumenical Studies 34(Spring 97): 202-17.
- Duke, Paul D. "Calling Forth the Kingdom." The Christian Century 112 (8 Nov. 1995): 1043.
- "Eco-myths." Christianity Today 38 (4 Apr. 1994): 22-33.
- Fee, Gordon. God's Empowering Presence. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994.
- . Paul, the Spirit and the People of God. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994.
- Fernando, Ajith, "God: The Source, the Originator and the End of Mission." W. Taylor 191-205.
- . "The Holy Spirit: the Divine Implementer of Mission." W. Taylor 223-38.
- . "Jesus: the Message and Model of Mission." W. Taylor 207-22.
- Gumbel, Nicky. Lecture to the Southeastern U.S. Alpha Conference at First United Methodist Church. Bedford, TX. 18 Mar. 1997.
- Hunter, George G. III. Church for the Unchurched. Nashville: Abingdon, 1996.
- Kaminer, Wendy. "American Gothic." American Prospect 11.26 (18 Dec. 2000): 38-39.
- Lampman, Jane. "Alpha Grabs Attention." Christian Science Monitor Subject 91.160 (15 July 1999): 15.

- Lane, Belden C. "Holy Silence." Christian Century (24 Oct. 2001): 24.
- Leslie, John. "A Neoplatonist's Pantheism." The Monist 80 (Apr. 1997): 218-31.
- Lewis, C. S. Five Books in One Volume. New York: Iversen, 1969.
- McClory, Robert. "Who Moved My Tabernacle? Dispute over Renovating Catholic Churches to Reflect Post-Vatican II Changes." U. S. Catholic 65.11 (Nov. 2000): 12-18.
- Neff, LaVonne. "They Have Taken Away My Lord." U. S. Catholic 61 (July 1996): 38-40.
- Oden, Thomas C. "Blinded by the Lite." Christianity Today 38 (12 Sept. 1994): 14-15.
- Olson, Roger E. "Postconservative Evangelicals Greet the Post Modern Age." Christian Century 112.3 (3 May 1995): 480-83.
- Ruffle, Douglas. "Connected in Christ." New World Outlook Nov-Dec 2001: 16-19.
- Shepherd, Victor A. "The Trinity against the Sprit of Unitarianism." W. Stiriling 179-196.
- Stiriling, Andrew, ed. The Trinity: An Essential for Faith in Our Time. Nappanee, IN: Evangel, 2002.
- Taylor, LaTonya. "Adaptable Alpha Course Draws Praise and Worry." Christianity Today 45.14 (12 Nov. 2001): 27.
- Taylor, William D., ed. Global Missiology for the 21 Century: The Iguassa Dialogue. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000.
- Wilkinson, Loren. "Saving Celtic Christianity." Christianity Today 44.5 (24 Apr. 2000): 78.